The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

Harold Campbell Vaughan Memorial Library
Acadia University

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol → (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:

L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

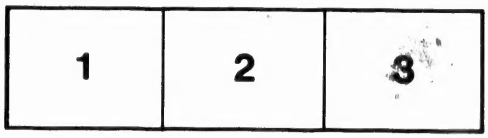
Harold Campbell Vaughan Memorial Library
Acadia University

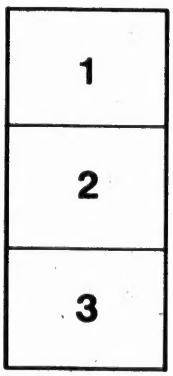
Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

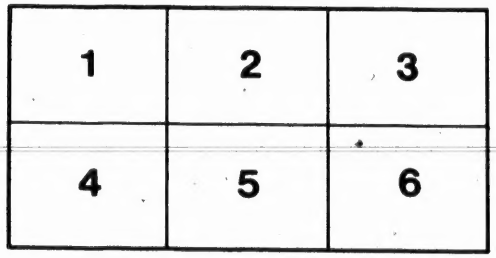
Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole → signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

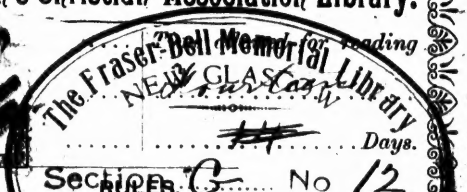






NEW GLASGOW

Young Men's Christian Association Library.



No. ..... Reading

Shelf .....

Section ..... Days.

Section G No 12

RULES.

1. Any person keeping book over allotted time incurs a fine of 2 cents per day, also deprived of all privileges of Library until fine is paid.

2. No book given to any person under the age of 16 years without a written request from parents or guardians. DAYS.

3. Any person injuring, losing or destroying a book shall be required to pay for same.

The Fraser-Bell Memorial Library
NEW GLASGOW
Section ..... No .....
Time allowed for reading
..... DAYS.

FOREWARNED—FOREARMED.

A
252
D28

FOREWARNED—FOREARMED.

BY

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, D.D.,

Author of "Talks with Young Men," etc.

THIRD THOUSAND.

TORONTO, CANADA:

S. R. BRIGGS,

TORONTO WILLARD TRACT DEPOSITORY AND BIBLE DEPOT,

CORNER OF YONGE AND TEMPERANCE STREETS.

PREFACE.

THE favour accorded to the "Talks with Young Men," published last year, and the pleasing testimony to its usefulness which I am constantly receiving, have induced me to yield to the request to issue another series of these homely addresses.

During a ministry of more than twenty years in London, in a district specially occupied by young men, it has been my lot to watch the career of large numbers who have found their way to the great city: and nothing has more deeply impressed me than the rapidity with which, in most cases, their moral course has been determined.

No place surpasses the metropolis either in the variety of its temptations and the facilities it offers for indulgence in vice, or, on the other hand, in the number of advantages and wholesome safeguards it provides: and it is of the utmost importance that at a very early stage a young man should receive the hand of genuine Christian friendship, and should be warned of the dangers with which he will be beset.

56934

At an age when the character is unformed, the nature pliable, and the passions strong, a little earnest counsel, judiciously given, may be of unspeakable value, and may be the means of retaining within the Christian fold not a few who otherwise, it is to be feared, might only go to swell the ranks of the vicious and profligate.

> "Facilis descensus Averni,
> Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,
> Hoc opus, hic labor est."

It has been said that young men do not like to be talked *to;* but my observation is that they do like to be talked *with:* indeed, there is no class of persons more amenable to sound advice when given in a brotherly, straightforward, and unaffected manner.

If the perusal of the following pages will prove as useful as there is reason to know the spoken addresses have been, I shall be amply rewarded.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	A BIRTHRIGHT BARGAINED AWAY	1
II.	GOOD TO BEAR THE YOKE IN YOUTH	17
III.	PAMPERED IN YOUTH, RUINED IN THE PRIME	31
IV.	A HEART NOT FIXED	45
V.	RICHES GOTTEN NOT BY RIGHT	59
VI.	PIOUS PATRIOTISM	77
VII.	SLEEPING UNDER THE SERMON	91
VIII.	DESTROYED BY PROSPERITY	105
IX.	PROFESSION WITHOUT PRACTICE, AND PRACTICE WITHOUT PROFESSION	119
X.	EARLY CUT OFF, BUT LONG REMEMBERED	133

XI.

PAGE

BREAKERS AHEAD! 147

XII.

FEEDING ON ASHES 161

XIII.

THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS IS HARD 175

XIV.

THE SHIPWRECK AT EZION-GEBER 189

XV.

SEPARATED: AND NO TEARS AT THE PARTING . . 203

XVI.

HALF-HEARTED; AND THEREFORE A FAILURE . . 217

XVII.

AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT 231

XVIII.

A YOUNG MAN COME TO HIMSELF 245

XIX.

GOD OUR HOPE IN YOUTH 259

XX.

YOUNG MAN, ARISE! 273

PAGE
147
161
175
189
203
217
231
245
259
273

A BIRTHRIGHT BARGAINED AWAY.

"*Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.*"

HEB. xii. 16

I.

A BIRTHRIGHT BARGAINED AWAY.

I SUPPOSE that, since the world began, there never was struck so foolish, so insane a bargain!

Just think what that young man did in a moment of impetuous folly. Let me remind you what his "birthright" was. As the eldest son of Isaac, he had a noble future before him. To his renowned grandfather Abraham the Lord had solemnly sworn, saying, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing." That signal blessing was to descend from sire to son all down the ages in the line of the first-born, until it should find its consummation in Christ Himself, of whom the Psalmist sang, in those prophetic words, "Men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." As Isaac's eldest son, Esau was naturally destined to be, so to speak, chief of the great clan: not only would he inherit a double portion of his father's wealth, but he would be one of the successive heads of that favoured nation, who were to be in multitude "like the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the seashore."

Moreover, there were spiritual privileges pertaining to his position. As the first-born, he would be the priest of the family. He would have a right to the covenant

made with Abraham, and from his loins the Messiah would come.

Never was a greater future before any child of man—never did a grander panorama of prospect open up to any one. Certainly no man of his day—no man living upon the earth—was so favoured as he. His "birthright" was everything to him. It was far more valuable than all other possessions. We can fancy him prizing it, glorying in the thought of it. We can imagine him, if asked to part with it, exclaiming with vehemence, "No: not for all the world!" Yet he sold it! For how much? Ten thousand shekels of gold? No; listen to the text, "For one morsel of meat he sold his birthright." For one short moment's gratification he sacrificed his inheritance, he stepped out of the royal line—with one stroke of the pen he struck his name off the illustrious roll. "Thus," writes Moses, "Esau despised his birthright." It is a terrible word that "despised"; but would a milder one meet the case? When a man barters away such a treasure for so mean a price, might he not as well throw it in the mire, and trample it under foot? "But," you say, "poor man, he was starving—he was at the point of death; and of what use would his birthright be to him, if he should drop down dead on the spot?" Nonsense! He was no more at the point of death than his brother Jacob. The fact is, the man was desperately hungry—and no wonder, he had just come from the hunting-field; and what with the bracing morning air, and the healthful excitement of the chase, his appetite was keen, as yours and mine would have been in the circumstances; and when he came into the house, and smelt the savory dish that his brother was cooking (and Jacob was one who always seemed to take good care of himself), he

felt he would give anything for a plateful of it; so, in a whining tone, he entreated, "I am famishing; I am like to drop down dead with hunger: give me some of that lentile pottage you have prepared."

Jacob took a mean advantage of him. With the keen commercial instinct which is said to have descended to all his posterity, and which knows how to turn a penny under any circumstances, he caught the opportunity to strike the most extraordinary bargain that ever was made. "I'll give you the soup," he says, "if you will give me your birthright in exchange."

I think he must have blushed when he made such a proposal. I think his face must have been as red as the pottage he was stirring. The hungry sportsman was in no mood for delay. "What is my birthright to me," he said, "if I starve to death? It won't feed me, or nourish me. Come, Jacob, let me have the dish; the birthright's yours."

Thus the strong craving of sense prevailed—the animal appetite conquered. The deed was done. The birthright was gone! "For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

It is no want of charity for me to say, that in this great assembly * there may be hundreds of young men who are making precisely Esau's mistake; nay, a mistake still more awful than his. He had been dead and gone for eighteen centuries, when an inspired apostle held up his case as a solemn warning to the Christian Hebrews of his time, bidding them "look diligently" lest any of themselves should repeat the fatal blunder; and now, when other eighteen centuries have rolled by, the story

* Preached in the Agricultural Hall,

is as fresh and the warning as needful, as ever. God help us to be faithful in self-examination to-night! Let us all "look diligently," lest there be in this hall "any man" (I quote the Revised Version) "that falleth short of the grace of God," lest there be here amongst us any such person as Esau.

I do not say that Esau was outwardly a bad man at all. In some elements of character he was superior to Jacob. There was much that was generous and noble in his nature. He was a rough sort of fellow, fond of field sports, and specially given to hunting; and such men are often wanting in the finer graces; but, judged by the world's standard, there was much that was likeable about him. One thing, however, he lacked; he had no spiritual religion, no faith in God; he lived just for this material world, with its present and sensual enjoyments; he looked no higher, and, therefore, had hardly a conception of his splendid birthright.

This is just what I fear of some of you. Remember you have a noble birthright too. You have been created for a glorious immortality. You were not born merely to grovel among the things of earth, to gratify your animal desires, and scrape together a little silver and gold. God made you for something better than mere eating and drinking, and working and sleeping. He designed you for something infinitely nobler than a brief brute existence here.

Would you know what your birthright is? Listen to such words as these: "This people have I formed for Myself, they shall show forth My praise." "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we sleep or wake, we should live together with

Him." Glorious and exalted destiny! Fellowship with God in this present world, and in the world to come life everlasting. This is the birthright of every man in this hall.

Can you say that you have personally secured the blessing? I believe some of you can, and it has thrown a halo and a brightness over your life, such as nothing else could give it. You feel you are living to purpose. Thank God yours is not a wasted life, that is being squandered away on folly, to collapse some day,—and leave you in the bitterness of remorse and the blackness of despair. Your Divine Father has laid His hand in benison on your head, and given you the sweet consciousness that He is at peace with you; and forth you go to each day's duties, strong in the assurance of His love, and full of courage and of hope for all the future.

But, ah! how many here have a different tale to tell? Why, in this metropolis there is not a day passes that does not witness some young man selling that splendid birthright of his for a mess of pottage, throwing away for some momentary gratification all that is noblest in him, sacrificing all his prospects for the pleasure of an hour. Hardly a week, but I am visited by some remorse-stricken Esau, who is in desperation to know whether by any possibility he can retrieve his error; but who seems to find that now, when he would inherit the blessing, he is rejected; "for he finds no place of repentance, though he seeks it carefully with tears." Do I not well, then, to lift up the voice of warning to-night, and entreat you, if it be not too late, to beware of Esau's terrible mistake? I shall put my finger on one or two forms of this fatal blunder.

I. See you *do not sacrifice your spiritual interests to the appetites of the flesh.* Such fallen creatures are we, it happens every day (and specially, young men, at your time

of life), that the interests of the soul, and the desires of the body, are in conflict. Your carnal nature, the animal in you, prompts you to that against which conscience protests, and from which the soul recoils. The flesh pulls you one way, the spirit another.

I have shown you how stupid, how reckless, how infatuated Esau was. Whatever of conscience or intelligence he possessed must have whispered to him, "As soon part with life itself, as with that noble birthright." But the gross appetite prevailed; the temptation overpowered him; the belly conquered!

Ah! the morsel may have been sweet; but what a price he paid for it! It is easy for us, as we read the story, to cry "Fool!"—but this very folly is being committed every day. It is as old as our fallen humanity. For the sake of a piece of fruit, our first parents sacrificed their whole inheritance, "brought death into this world, and all our woe, with loss of Eden." One look back upon Sodom, and Lot's wife becomes a pillar of salt! Achan covets a Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and forfeits his life in consequence. For the sake of a woman's caresses Samson loses his hair, his strength, his sight, his all. David, for the sake of Bathsheba, loses a year's communion with God, and hands his name down with an ugly blot upon it to all posterity. Ahab, coveting a pretty garden, commits murder, and brings down Heaven's judgments on his head. Judas, for a few shillings, betrays his Master. I might go on multiplying such instances to almost any extent; Esau was not alone in selling his birthright for a morsel of meat.

One sin has often been the blighting of a man's whole life. One night's carousal has been the blasting of a promising career. Let every young man remember that

he carries with him a breast full of evil passions, that may indeed slumber for a season, but which, in a moment, stirred by some occasion, may assert their fierce power; and, unless he is stronger than they, may hurl him over the brink into moral ruin. You try to persuade yourselves that this and that course is not wrong, or at least excusable, because the desire burns so wildly within you; but is there not a secret monitor striving to hold you back, and telling you that you go forward at your soul's eternal peril? It is a sound principle to act upon—and I can give you Scripture to support it—that when you doubt the lawfulness of an act, *that* is sufficient to decide that it is wrong, unless the lawfulness of omitting it is equally doubtful. There are men who, in the presence of some great temptation, have wavered for days and for weeks, conscience pulling one way, and the flesh the other: and at last they have yielded, and in that moment self-respect has gone, and peace has gone, and principle has gone; and now they are hasting down at eighteen knots an hour to utter destruction. One sweet morsel tempted them; and for that one morsel they "sold their birthright."

Do not look where I point, but yonder is a young man who came to London with as fair a character, and as bright a career as ever man possessed, and to-night he is almost a wreck. Just the same old story; first, the genial glass, the jovial company, the brilliant saloon, the lascivious song, the amorous dance, the sharp taste of pleasure, one rich delicious morsel, and then—the enchantment gone—the dupe awakes to find he has bartered his birthright, for one night of lust sold an eternity of joy. Oh that you could but see the end of vice before you see the beginning! That there is a day of judgment after death we all know; every reader of the Bible knows that; ay, but there is a day of judgment too before death; a day

of judgment in the bones, in the nerves, in the liver, in the brain; not to speak of the conscience. There is many a man walking these crowded streets, who might nearly as well be in Highgate or in Kensal Green, for all that he retains of what can truly be called life. He is not old, but his sap is gone; bankrupt in character, broken down in spirit; a mere fragment of a man, he crawls through life, a trouble to others, and a burden to himself. To gratify his fleshly appetite he sold his birthright; and now he can find no place of repentance, though he seeks it carefully with tears.

II. See you *do not sacrifice the future for the present.* This is just putting the same thing in a different form. Esau saw before him the possibility of an immediate enjoyment; his future interests were distant, and vague, and shadowy. "Ah," he said, "let the future take care of itself; I must have the dainty morsel while I can get it."

Precisely so are men acting every day, and in doing so play the fool. If they were brutes we could not blame them. The beast of the field will seize the first gratification within its reach, and knows nothing of to-morrow or an after day. Were we mere animals, or were we but rude savages, incapable of looking in advance, without an idea of making the interests of one day subserve those of another, in such a case we should not be so open to censure.

> "'Live while you live,' the epicure will say,
> 'And seize the pleasures of the present day.'"

And did not reason and revelation both tell us of the coming future, the advice might not be a foolish one. It is an old saying, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," which just means that one certainty is worth two

uncertainties: and had we no conception, either of after years in this world, or of an immortality in the world to come, perhaps the best thing we could do would be to take every "mess of pottage" we could secure.

But when we know that this being of ours is to go on and go on for ages, that these capacities for joy or pain are to grow and expand to an eternal future, surely no terms of condemnation can be too strong to apply to us, if we think of nothing but immediate pleasure.

And yet, probably, this is just what some of you are doing. To-night you assent to what I say, but to-morrow you will laugh at the preacher, and treat the whole matter as a good joke. It is horrible the way men will ridicule on Monday what they solemnly accepted on the Sabbath. They will sing, as you have been doing just now:—

> "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
> Pilgrim through this barren land,"

and listen with due respect to the pulpit, as it warns them of the alcoholic cup, and of the strange woman, and of the haunts of lust; and within twenty-four hours they will slip into the casino or the tavern, nudging one another as they enter, and saying, "Ah, I thought the parson told us such places were dangerous." Thus do men quench the Spirit, and trample God's message under their feet. I have myself seen enough of such madness to give realness to my address. If I do not appeal to you with burning earnestness, my heart must be a flint.

I tell you, sirs, sin is hard, and merciless, and cruel. I have seen the devil putting the dainty morsel into a young man's lips, and then wresting from him his birthright for ever. I have seen as fine lads as ever entered a merchant's office, tempted by the fatal bait—a brief spell of carnal pleasure being followed by years of torment

and of horror, beside which the Inquisition itself would be a relief.

Some time ago, a ship went down, having struck a hidden reef. Fortunately, unlike the sad case of the *Teuton* the other day, there was time enough to get the passengers and crew into the boats, which safely held off from the foundering vessel. Just before the last boat started, the captain and mate, having seen that all were safe, stood upon the gangway ready to leave the ship. She was fast sinking—no time to be lost. The mate said to the captain, "I have left my purse below; let me go and get it." "Man," replied the other, "you have no time for that; jump at once." "Just a moment, captain —I can easily get it;" and away the mate rushed below. But in that moment the ship went creeping down. I hear the gurgling flood! The captain has barely time to save himself, when, swirling in the awful vortex, the vessel disappears! By-and-by the body of the mate was found, and in his stiffened hand was tightly grasped the fatal purse. When the purse was opened, what do you think it contained? Eighteenpence! And for that paltry sum he risked and lost his life.

Oh! if I were to-night only addressing those who had already made Esau's mistake, I might almost despair of doing any good; but many of you, thank God, have not sold your birthright yet; and, knowing what temptations lie before you, what fiends of hell will seek to ensnare you, I plead with you to plant your feet firmly on the line of principle, refuse to yield one inch, and say, "God helping me, I shall keep my garments unspotted by the flesh." O my boy! the child of many prayers, be this the night when, with solemn vow, you shall consecrate yourself to God, and determine, in His strength, to walk in virtue's path. Blessings on her, at whose knees you first clasped your

hands in prayer, whose hands smoothed your little pillow, as you lisped:

"Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me;
Bless Thy little lamb to-night."

Are all these tender memories and holy impressions to be drowned in the whirlpool of delirious folly? You who have been drifting further and further away from the happy innocence of early days, are you just to go on in your downward course, till, like Esau, you shall find no place of repentance? You, on whom my words make so little impression that, as soon as I close the Book, you shall bolt out of this hall, impatient to get to the giddy street, and grudging even five minutes for our closing hymn, am I to write you down "hopeless," booked by flying express for the city of destruction? God forbid!

"Turn, O turn, while yet you may;
Flee from death, from sin, from sorrow;
Say not 'tis too soon to-day,
Lest it be too late to-morrow."

III. I have one word more. There may be some here to whom all that I have said has little application, for it is not in that direction that their danger lies. You have become *sceptical*. You are advocates of what is known by a much-abused word, "free-thought." You have been reading or hearing specious arguments against Christianity; and you begin to talk of the vital truths of religion as only so many exploded superstitions. You are enjoying the luxury of absolute independence of thought, and for that "morsel of meat" you are selling the birthright of the Christian faith that has been handed down to you from a godly ancestry.

Well, I cannot rejoice with you on your new position. In my university days there was no man for whom I

entertained a profounder admiration than the late Professor George Wilson, of Edinburgh. He was then a man under forty years of age, and destined, I am convinced, had his life been spared, to stand in the very foremost ranks of the scientists of this age. His mind, unlike his body, was of a peculiarly healthy order; he was a worshipper of truth, and an ardent student of nature. In a letter to a well-known and Christian man of science in London, bearing date January 1859, Dr. Wilson wrote (I give you his words at length, for they are very striking):—"I rejoice to hear of your success with the young men. God bless you in your work! It is worth all other work, and far beyond all Greek and Roman fame, all literary or scientific triumphs; and yet it is quite compatible with both. Douglas Jerrold's life is most sad to read. In many respects it gave me a far higher estimate of him morally than I had had before. But what a pagan outlook! What a heathen view of this world and the next! He might as well have been born in the days of Socrates or Seneca as in these days, for any good Christ's coming apparently did him. There is something unspeakably sad in his life, and it was better than that of many a *littérateur*. The ferocity of attack on cant and hypocrisy, the girding at religion, which they cannot leave alone; above all, the dreary, meagre, cheerless, formal faith, and the dim and doubtful prospect for the future, are features in that *littérateur* life most saddening and disheartening. And the men of science, are they better? God forbid. I should slander my brethren in study, men above me in intellect, in capacity, and accomplishment. But recently I have come across four of the younger chemists, excellent fellows, of admirable promise and no small performance. I was compelled to enter into some religious conversation with them, and found them creedless, having no 'I

believe' for themselves: standing in that maddest of all attitudes—namely, with finger pointed to this religious body and that religious body, expatiating upon their faults, as if at the day of judgment it would avail them anything, that the Baptists were bigoted, and the Quakers self-righteous!" "I rejoice," wrote Wilson in another of his letters, "that I have a creed with which I can face death and eternity, and which makes this life often a joyous worship, and always a patient endurance." Oh that each of you had a faith like that Christian philosopher, reasonable, intelligent, robust, yet simple as that of a little child!

What an amazing pity that any man should go from this hall to-night unblessed, when the Lord Jesus wants to throw His lasso over you, and bring you, willing captives, to His happy fold.

Young men! God help every one of you to toss away each tempting mess of pottage from your lips, and rise to the height of your noble, your glorious birthright. Amen.

GOOD TO BEAR THE YOKE IN YOUTH.

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

LAM. iii. 27.

II.

GOOD TO BEAR THE YOKE IN YOUTH.

THIS is the testimony of a man well advanced in life. It is not a thing that a young man would be likely to say. When we are young, we think it is very far from being "good" that we should bear the yoke. Indeed, there is no period of life when yoke-bearing is a thing we would choose. It may be good, but it is not agreeable.

his youth."
LAM. iii. 27.

But then, it so happens, that just as there are many pleasant things that are not good, there are also good things that are not pleasant; and the goodness of them is sometimes in proportion to their unpleasantness. The most valuable medicines are not unfrequently the most unpalatable.

When the prophet Jeremiah wrote these words, he produced an aphorism as wise and pointed as any proverb of King Solomon. I propose this evening to have a little familiar talk with you upon the subject.

The mention of a "yoke" suggests matters agricultural. The figure is taken from farm life. The Jews were accustomed to make use of oxen for the ploughing of the land, and it was of great importance that the animals should be early brought under training. If a bullock is not broken in when it is young, it will never be worth much for the plough. The work will be galling for itself, and most unsatisfactory for the husbandman. If a ploughing ox is to be well adapted for its labour, and make a good furrow, it must be disciplined while it is quite young. If

this be neglected, it is vain to attempt it by-and-by; the beast will only be fretted and irritated, and any work it is put to will be a failure. A traveller in the East graphically describes, as an eyewitness, the difficulty of getting an untrained ox to perform agricultural work. "I had frequent opportunities," he says, "of witnessing the conduct of oxen, when for the first time put into the yoke. They generally made a strenuous struggle for liberty, repeatedly breaking the yoke, and attempting to make their escape. At other times such bullocks would lie down upon their side or back, and remain so in defiance of the drivers, though they lashed them with ponderous whips. Sometimes, from pity to the animal, I would interfere, and beg them not to be so cruel. 'Cruel!' they would say, 'it is mercy;—for if we do not conquer him now, he will require to be so beaten all his life.'"

Well, this is just as true of any animal that is capable of being trained at all; a horse, for example, or a dog, or other creatures of less intelligence; if you delay till they are of mature age, and then try to bring them into subjection and obedience, you are almost certain to find your efforts fruitless.

Now, if it is good for all other creatures that are made for some kind of service to bear the yoke in youth, it would be strange if man were an exception. But man is no exception, and, therefore, he may just as well face the fact, and at an early stage of life seriously and thoughtfully ask himself, "What is the yoke which it is good for me to bear?" and this is the question I propose to answer this evening.

The text, indeed, expresses a truth which does not belong exclusively to the domain of religion. I suppose there is not a moralist all the world over who would not endorse it.

But Christianity not only confirms, but interprets it, and gives it wide and wholesome application. In unfolding to you the text, I propose to start on the lowest plane, and, by a series of steps, bring you up to the highest principle which these words express.

I. I observe then, first of all, that it is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of *subjection to authority*. If he does not learn this lesson early, he will suffer for it by-and-by. Nothing can be worse for a young person than to be absolutely free and uncontrolled. The spoiled and pampered child, who is "a law unto himself," whose will has never been curbed or crossed, and who has been used to have everything his own way, will never turn out well in life; his career is certain to be one full of misery to himself, and full of troubles to others. There are few characters less attractive. The unkindest thing you can do to a child is to throw the reins over his shoulders, and let him do as he likes. If you wish to ruin his prospects, and to develop a mean, selfish, over-bearing nature, never contradict him, never oppose him, let his every freak and fancy be gratified.

But it is not only for little children that the yoke of subjection to authority is wholesome. It is quite possible that the yoke may be removed too soon. Until the character is fairly formed, and the judgment is stronger than the will, and the mind and conscience have ascendency over the lower nature, the controlling influence of another should be felt. Of course, it is not to be expected that we shall acknowledge this whilst we are young, for youth always likes to kick off the traces, and be wholly free from restraint; but though the yoke be not to our liking, it is a most wholesome discipline, and in our riper years we shall be thankful at the remembrance of it. The craving for liberty, noble as the instinct is, may sometimes

take a distorted and injudicious form. Many a respectable young woman, who is most happily placed in domestic service, gives up her situation, and enters some factory, under the tempting notion that she will then be her own mistress; and I have known of young men, through the same impatience of the yoke of authority, throwing up an excellent berth, and damaging their whole prospects for life. I believe there is not a wise and successful merchant in the city of London to-day who would not heartily endorse this first interpretation of my text. But

II. I now remark that it is good for a man to bear in his youth the yolk of *self-restraint*. It is not enough to be under the rule of others. Let such authority be ever so great, there is still a sphere to which it cannot extend, and in which there is scope for a man's own conscience to assert its command. St. Paul speaks of this form of yoke, when he says, "I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection." However widely we may differ in appetite and temperament—some, of course, finding the needful self-control much harder than others—there are, with all of us, desires and tendencies which we have sternly to resist, and the denying of which is part of the training by which we are fitted for a noble and useful life. The argument of those who excuse their self-indulgence on the plea that the lower passions of human nature would not be given us if they were not to be gratified, is equally wicked and absurd; for this life is a probationary state, and there can be neither discipline nor probation where there are no temptations to resist, and where we are at full liberty to drift with every current, and yield to every impulse of the flesh. As reasonably may the murderer justify his deed which yields him for a moment or two the sweet enjoyment of revenge. The very lusts, passions, appetites, and tempers of which, more or less, we are all conscious, may

be turned to real service in our moral equipment for life; for, in the steadfast resistance of them, and victory over them, we become stronger men than had there been no conflict at all.

III. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of *difficulty and toil*. Nothing like having to "rough it a bit" in early life. Those who find a snug berth ready for them, without the need of effort and industry on their own part, rarely turn out well. Of course, there are young gentlemen who do not believe this at all, and think themselves exceedingly unfortunate if they do not slip into some easy situation, where there is plenty of pay and little work. They remind me of a Welsh servant I once heard of, who was exceedingly proud of herself because she had composed a piece of poetry: and when asked to repeat it, she gave it thus:—

"I wish I was married,
And very well too;
Plenty of money,
And nothing to do."

But they are very silly people who have any such ambition. A friend once inquired of Sir Horace Vere, "Pray, Sir Horace, of what did your brother die?" "He died, sir," was the reply, "of having nothing to do." "Ah, that is enough to kill anybody," the other rejoined.

It is very far indeed from being an advantage to a man to have been "born with a silver spoon in his mouth." It is good for us all to have to work for our bread. Our Creator intended us for labour, and not for indolence. Even before the fall, man had his physical work assigned to him. God placed him not in a "sleepy hollow" to fatten in idleness, but in a large garden, to dress it and to keep it. The lazy Dutchman, whose idea of heaven is a feather

bed and a long pipe, is a very poor specimen of humanity. Point me to the most successful and most highly-respected merchants in the city of London to-day, and I will venture to assert that 75 per cent. of them began life with nothing in their pockets, and had to push their own way, and for a few years submit to a good deal deal of drudgery and rough work before they attained to an easy and comfortable position. It has been my lot to know several young gentlemen who were launched forth with a few hundred pounds, and a pair of fine kid gloves; and they have made nothing of it; they are to-day just where they began some years ago, and do not seem likely ever to improve their position; whilst others, who started along with then, without two half-crowns to rub on one another, have now got far ahead, and are fast becoming men of wealth and influence. There is nothing worse for a youth than the notion that he will not need to toil for his living, that some dear old aunt is going to die at the convenient moment, and leave him a fortune; ten to one, the lad will give himself up to indolence and pleasure, and when the money comes will not know how to rightly use it. Many is the prosperous man of business who will tell you that he can never be too thankful for having had to bear in his youth the yoke of genuine hard work. It was this that developed his energies, strengthened his muscle, and, under God, made his life successful and happy.

IV. I now lift up the text to a higher level, and read in it an axiom of true religion. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of *living godliness*. It is to this that our blessed Saviour invites us when He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." It is good for a man to become a decided Christian in early life.

Now it is perfectly true that, as Christ says, "this yoke

is easy, and this burden light"; and yet it would not be called a yoke at all if it did not mean something that the flesh does not readily take up—something that is contrary to our fallen nature. It is not natural to us to be Christians. Like the bullock, we have to bend, we have to stoop, that the yoke may be put upon us; and this stooping is what none of us like. Our proud wills must be humbled; our old self must be crucified.

There are few men who enter into the light and liberty of happy believers without knowing something of this inward conflict, before Divine grace conquers, and Christ wins the whole heart. As a general rule, there is a period of darkness and sore discipline somewhere in the Christian's life, and if it comes when you are old, it will be all the more severe and hard to bear. It is well to have it over in early life. I remember an old and godly man, who was much tried in the latter years of his life with spiritual depression, saying to me, "Ah, sir! it is not good to have to bear the yoke in one's old age."

I am never much grieved when a young person comes to me and tells of deep spiritual trouble. I have far more hope of such an one than of those who never seem to find a difficulty on the road to heaven. That celestial palace is generally reached rather by the low level than the high level line; and it is through the valley of humiliation that you attain to the sweetest sunlight of conscious and habitual acceptance with God. Do not be discouraged, my brother, because it seems to you so difficult to become a Christian, or because a godly life demands at the outset such self-denial and mortifying of the flesh; the earlier you bear this yoke of Jesus the happier your life will be.

V. I go further. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of a *public Christian profession.* In

other words, it is an excellent thing, while we are quite young, to take our stand as decided followers of Jesus. The first thing, of course, is to be a Christian; but the next thing is to avow it. It is good in a thousand ways —good for yourselves now; good for others; good for the cause of Christ; good for the glory of God; good for your own future comfort and joy, that, without delay, you step right over to the ranks of the Lord's people, and openly attach yourselves to the Christian Church. I am addressing myself to those of you who believe the Gospel, and trust that you are saved through the Redeemer's sacrifice; to those of you who, were you brought to the gate of eternity to-night, would be calm and fearless in the conviction that Jesus is your all-sufficient Saviour. And I put it to you, if it is not a cowardly thing to cherish the inward comfort of the Gospel, and the eternal hope which it inspires, and yet shrink from a public testimony of it. Remember that St. Paul brackets these two things together, the "belief of the heart, which is unto righteousness," and the "confession of the mouth, which is unto salvation." It is a more serious matter than many suppose, this declining to commit oneself to a religious profession, and refusing to comply with the Saviour's clear command, as He pointed to the bread and wine of the Last Supper, "This do in remembrance of Me." Only two days ago I stood by the bedside of an old and dying man, who assured me that even from childhood he had put his trust in the Redeemer, but he had never confessed Him at the sacramental table. Do ye suppose that it can be without disadvantage that one thus disobeys the Master's wish? My own observation is, that those who do not become church members in youth rarely become so in after life, and they are never strong, joyful, useful Christians. On the other hand, some of the best

young men I have had the good fortune to know have emphatically told me that they have found it good for them to take upon themselves this yoke; that it has been a great blessing to them amid the temptations of life to be openly committed to the side of truth; it has been to them at once a check and a stimulus, restraining them from evil, and impelling them to what was right.

VI. Think a moment; does this yoke include anything else? Yes; it is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of *Christian service*. I shall suppose, my brother, that you are a true disciple, and that you have joined the fellowship of the Church; your soul will not make much progress, let me tell you, unless you are doing something in the way of practical work for God. There is nothing like giving a person, as soon as he is converted, a definite sphere of service. It will help your own faith wonderfully to be engaged in some real labour for the Lord. The idle Christian is never a lively or prosperous one; and it is quite a mistake to imagine that it is only the ripe and experienced that should attempt work in Christ's vineyard. You cannot begin too soon if you set to it in a modest and unassuming way. The first humble efforts of a young and fervid piety have often been signally blest. I have particularly noticed this, how God seems specially to honour the earliest endeavours of an ardent piety to serve Him and extend His kingdom. Such modest work has often been sealed with a blessing, which seems to be withheld from grander undertakings.

Do not be discouraged then, though your efforts are very small. Drop a solemn word in the ear of some careless companion, and see how the Lord helps you in that. Link your arm with some thoughtless young fellow, and try to bring him with you to the house of God. Write a kind

letter to your cousin who is getting tinged with infidelity, and tell him of the nobler and better way.

If you are only ready for work, we shall find it for you; work in the Sunday School; work in the mission district; work in the evangelistic meeting, or in some other line that will suit you better. But indeed, if your heart is full of love to Christ, you will find opportunity everywhere for scattering the good seed. I am often astounded to notice how quickly the devil gets his followers buckled to active service. What an amount of mischief one really bad fellow will work in the circle in which he moves. One lad in a public school, one workman in a shop, one clerk in an office, what a poison that young infidel or scapegrace will spread in the course of a few hours! Oh that the followers of Christ were at least as valiant and as zealous for their glorious Master!

VII. I come now to the last point, and without it my subject would not be complete. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of *personal affliction*. Many an one has thanked God all his days for some heavy cross he had to carry when he was young. That three months' tedious illness you had, you will never forget it; it left impressions that cannot be effaced, and taught you lessons you will carry with you to your grave. I have heard persons say of some bereavement they met with in early life, perhaps the loss of a dear mother or sister, that it gave a tone to their whole after life. In the memoir of Dr. Norman McLeod it is stated, that nothing produced a greater effect upon him during the whole course of his life, than the death of a favourite brother, when they were both quite young men.

There are many other forms of trial, as you well know; there is the breaking up of a happy home; the coming away from all the tender associations and

hallowed scenes of infancy; the solitude of a great city where all are strangers to you; the loss of a situation, or disappointment in your efforts to obtain one; all these things are trying, and may prove a heavy yoke to bear; but, believe me, it is good to bear them in one's youth. You may be the better all your days for the bitter discipline. There is a marked want about those Christians who have never suffered. You will rarely see piety of a rich and mellow tone in a man who has known nothing of sorrow. Did you ever watch such a person in his efforts to comfort another who is in trouble—what a poor job he makes of it!

Now, the seven-fold yoke I have spoken of is that of subjection to authority, self-restraint, difficulty and toil, living godliness, Christian profession, Christian service, and personal affliction; and I do not hesitate to say that these are all embraced in the wise proverb of our text: "It is good for a man to bear this yoke in his youth."

Ah, do you say, what a wretched bondage, enough to deter one from religion altogether? Nay, my brothers, as Samuel Rutherford once said, "Christ's cross is the lightest burden I ever bear; it is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or as sails are to a ship." Just so. An eagle's wings have a prodigious weight, but is not the noble bird the lighter for having them? What more ponderous than the canvas of a ship, but is not the vessel the lighter for its sails? When Christ puts His yoke upon you He takes off the devil's yoke, and what a release is that! No wonder He says in Hosea, "I was to them as they that take off the yoke." So that, after all, it is but a choice between two yokes, the devil's, which is galling, oppressive, crushing; and Christ's, which is easy and light. A blessed thing indeed it is, though rare, when a man who

has seen sixty or seventy summers becomes a Christian. Mercy at the eleventh hour is something to praise God for. But, oh! it is better a hundredfold when life at its commencement is given to God, and Christ's yoke cheerfully accepted in the days of youth. Bend now, my brothers, and He will lift up your heads for ever!

PAMPERED IN YOUTH, RUINED IN THE PRIME.

"But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him."

2 Chron. x. 8.

III.

PAMPERED IN YOUTH, RUINED IN THE PRIME.

THE life of Rehoboam supplies a most remarkable illustration of the truth, that whatever else may be hereditary—title, property, wealth, talent, disease, certainly wisdom, at least, is not. Like grace, it does not run in the blood. Godly parents, we know, may have a wicked offspring; and the wisest of men may have for his son as big a fool as ever breathed. I cannot say whether Solomon was recording his own domestic experience, when he wrote amongst his proverbs, "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother"; but I have a strong suspicion he was thinking of the subject of my sermon to-night, when he declared, "Therefore I hated all the labour which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me; and who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?" A fool he turned out to be; and the incident we were reading this evening, as it is the first recorded instance of his folly, so it gave shape and turn to his whole after history.

Let me briefly put the story before you, and then extract some practical lessons from it.

The time of Rehoboam's accession to the throne was one which demanded exceptional vigour and prudence combined. There was needed the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*, the iron hand in a glove of silk. From

the earliest period of Jewish history, it was but too evident that the confederation of the twelve tribes was but imperfectly cemented. Specially after the death of Saul did a sort of deeply-rooted jealousy manifest itself between the tribes of Israel in general, and the tribe of Judah. The powerful Ephraimites could never brook a position of inferiority. They were always ready to show a spirit of resentment, if any enterprise was undertaken without their approval and co-operation. It appears that immediately after the slaughter of King Saul, the tribe of Judah, without waiting to consult the other tribes, came and anointed David as their king; and that it was not until the house of Saul had been almost exterminated, that David's government was accepted and acknowledged by the whole nation. Even then the latent jealousy was not uprooted.

Nor did it tend to heal the sore, when King David removed his court from Shechem, the ancient capital, and transferred the tabernacle and centre of Divine worship from Shiloh to Jerusalem. The Ephraimites, and the other tribes that were in full sympathy with them, felt that these distinctions bestowed on Judah were slights cast on them; and the secret animosity naturally became deeper. The base Absalom knew this well, and cunningly availed himself of the circumstance, in seeking to seduce a large portion of the nation from its allegiance to his father. The defection broke out afresh upon Absalom's death, and found expression in a war-cry, which was remembered for ages, and was shouted forth anew in Rehoboam's days, "What portion have we in David? or what inheritance have we in the son of Jesse? Every man to your tents, O Israel!"

But there were other causes that operated later on to produce and intensify this discontent. The extravagant, and in his latter days selfish, expenditure of Solomon had imposed heavy burdens on the people, which they were

not willing to bear. His reign, prosperous and magnificent as it was, proved, by reason of its monopolies and excessive taxation, so oppressive, that large numbers of the people were only too ready, on the first favourable opportunity, to protest and rebel. That opportunity arrived, on the appointed coronation-day of his son and successor at Shechem. If ever there was needed a young king of conciliating manners and sound judgment, it was then. Unhappily, such a man was not Rehoboam.

I must not here occupy your time by saying much of Jeroboam, another notable man who appears upon the scene. But, to see the force of our text, we must glance for a moment at this personage. He had been a distinguished officer, and at one time a personal favourite of Solomon's. By the force of his own character, he rose to a position of great influence; and belonging to the tribe of Ephraim, was fitted, in the event of a revolution, to be a serious rival to Rehoboam. The disaffected tribes soon came to look to him to represent their cause. Jeroboam, already informed by a prophet that he is destined to bear rule over five-sixths of the kingdom, bides his time. A mine, so to speak, is dug beneath the throne; the train of powder is laid; and all that is wanted is—to supply the spark. Rehoboam's coronation-day has come. The fine old city of Shechem is *en fête*. Banners flying; bells ringing; trumpets blaring. Gaily-harnessed regiments crowd the streets. White-robed ecclesiastics, in solemn procession, march to the place of ceremony. Holy prayers are recited, and psalms are chanted, and the sacred oil outpoured: and now the resplendent crown, glittering with diamonds and gold, is placed on the young man's head; and the vast assemblage is expected, with jubilant and simultaneous voice rending the air, to shout "God save the king!" But

no cheers ascend from that surging throng. In vain do obsequious courtiers strive to evoke one solitary huzzah. An ominous silence reigns. A sullen gloom is on the upturned faces of the multitude. Rehoboam, pale and nervous, looks on in embarrassment, and knows not what to do. Suddenly, a tremendous cheer! What means this? Ah! you have not long to ask. The excited crowd making way and dividing to let him pass, welcome their hero, Jeroboam. He steps to the front, and looking Rehoboam full in the face, addresses him thus:—"Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee." I see determination in the speaker's face. That is not a man to be trifled with. Clearly he means business; and Rehoboam, if he is a wise man, will think twice before he treats him with contempt. The young monarch is nonplussed: conflicting feelings struggle in his breast. Just at that moment, methinks, one of the aged councillors, who stand beside him, whispers a suggestion, "Say to him and the people, that you will think over the matter, and bid them come to you again in three days." The suggestion is acted on, and the storm averted for a little. Meanwhile, Rehoboam calls a council of the old and experienced statesmen who are around his throne, and asks their advice. Unanimously they recommend gentle measures. "Speak kindly to the people," they say, "their temper is somewhat roused, and they are ready to do desperate things; make every concession that is possible, try a conciliatory course; and the storm will blow over."

It had been well for him if he had accepted their advice, and remembered one of his own father's proverbs, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." It is wonderful what a little gentleness and prudence can do at such a

juncture; and how a wise word and skilful hand may calm the fury of an excited multitude.

Unfortunately, this was just what Rehoboam did not possess. Proud and self-willed, he was not disposed for a moment to parley with those presumptuous malcontents, and would not act on the advice which the old men gave him. A sharp and peremptory course was more to his liking; and so he turned to the younger men, who had been his own companions, and asked what they had to say. Full of the rashness of youth, and only too ready by flattery to court the favour of the king, they recommended him to give the people a reply that was equally impertinent and stern, and fitted to rouse their fiercest rage, "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. Whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

For the sequel we are quite prepared. The pent-up indignation of the people burst into open revolt. The covenant nation is rent in twain—ten tribes separating from the other two; and the foundation is laid of a succession of calamities and fratricidal wars as sad as the history of our race records.

Rehoboam's career continued as it began. Folly and failure were its most prominent features, his misfortunes seeming but to make him more stupid and resolute, and illustrating his own father's memorable proverb, "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

Many a bright Scriptural character is set before us for our *example;* this man is set before us for our *warning.*

There were specially two things, I believe, that contributed to make his life a failure; I am sure you will not take it amiss, if I say a few plain words about them. In

the first place, *he was brought up in the lap of luxury*, and that is not good for any man. His father lived in a style of magnificence that has never been equalled. Never was a lad brought up in a more luxurious home. The splendour of Solomon's palace was the wonder of the world. When the Queen of Sheba visited it, and saw (to use her own words) "the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers," and so forth, there was no more spirit in her. She was dumbfounded. Not a thing that heart could wish that was not there. Everything that could feast the eye, and please the palate, and delight the ear. Vessels of gold, and couches of ebony, and curtains of Tyrian purple, and upholstery of cedar, and pillars of marble, and gardens of beauty, and ponds of fish, and horses of finest breed, and every conceivable thing that can delight the sons of men. Not a breath of air that was not laden with the perfume of sweetest flowers, and tremulous with notes of exquisite music. Not a morning that brought not with it its fresh round of pleasure. Not a meal that was not a banquet. Not a room that was not a place of enchantment.

Thus was Rehoboam's youth and boyhood spent. Moreover, he was heir to a crown. Courtiers flattered him. Young men felt honoured by his friendship. He had no opposition to contend with, no drudgeries to submit to, no hardships to bear.

Now, could anything have been morally worse for him than that? I ask the head of some large academy, "What is the chief cause of the ruin of many lads belonging to respectable families?" and he whispers, "Too much money." It is a good thing for a young fellow to have to rough it a bit; and you may be very thankful that few of you have been

born with a silver spoon in your mouth. The president of one of the largest educational institutions in America stated that he believed the surest protection to young men against the perils of opening life was poverty. A free supply of pocket-money has been the destruction of many a promising boy. The being free from the necessity of working for a living, has been the worst thing in the lot of many a young man. I have personally known youths who were unfortunate enough to start life with a patrimony of £200 a year; and they never came to anything. "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth." It is good for a man, though he is going to be an architect, or a civil engineer, or a naval officer, to be familiar with the workshop, and the anvil, and the forge, and the ropes and spars; these are the men that prove successful and get to the top of the tree.

I have just been reading with intense interest a capital book, which I would recommend to every one of you. I refer to the autobiography of James Nasmyth, the inventor of the steam-hammer. The grand lesson of the book I take to be the value of realness and thoroughness in every work we undertake. Here is a very characteristic passage. "I often observe in shop windows," says Mr. Nasmyth, "every detail of model ships and model steam-engines, supplied ready-made for those who are said to be of an ingenious and mechanical turn. Thus the vital uses of resourcefulness are done away with, and the sham exhibition of mechanical genius is paraded before you by the young impostors, the result, for the most part, of too free a supply of pocket-money. I have known too many instances of parents being led, by such false evidence of constructive skill, to apprentice their sons to some engineering firm, and after paying vast sums, finding out that the pretender comes out of the engineering shop with

no other practical accomplishment than that of glove-wearing and cigar-smoking! The truth is," continues Nasmyth, "that the eyes and the fingers—the bare fingers—are the two principal inlets to sound practical instruction. I have no faith in young engineers who are addicted to wearing gloves. Gloves, especially kid gloves, are perfect non-conductors of technical knowledge."

Well, the connection between Rehoboam and kid gloves may not at first be apparent, and yet, there is a good deal in it, for had Solomon's son been brought up less luxuriously, had he known something in his early days of real hard work, had he met with difficulties and rebuffs such as fall to the lot of many, he might have turned out a more sensible and successful man.

Now do let me urge you, my good friends, to be downright *thorough* in everything you take in hand. I think none of us are too big to learn a lesson from a young servant girl who applied to Mr. Spurgeon to be admitted into the Church. After some conversation with her, the celebrated Baptist preacher pressed her for some evidence of a change of heart. Her artless reply was admirable. "Since I became a Christian I always sweep under the mats."

What a lesson our Divine Master has taught us, in the testimony He gives as to His own principle of action: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."

Excuse me saying that this is precisely where so many fail. Their work is left unfinished. Every work that is worth doing at all is worth doing well, from making a besom to setting jewels in a crown. If one young clerk in an office is a Christian, his ought to be the best-kept books in that establishment; the Christian carpenter

should turn out the best-made windows and doors; and the Christian bricklayer build walls which one would not be afraid to lean against. Oh for a more practical every-day religion, that would prove its reality in the humblest details of our common life! That is a fine petition at the close of one of Keble's well-known hymns—

> "And help us, this and every day,
> To live more nearly as we pray!"

which is the same thought which a missionary tells us he heard one of the South Sea Islanders express at the close of a Sunday evening service. He was leading the devotions of the congregation, and he prayed—"Lord, let not our good thoughts this day be like the fine clothes we have been wearing, soon to be taken off, folded up, and stowed away in a box till another Sabbath comes round. Oh, let them rather be like the tattoo on our bodies, ineffaceable till death!"

The second thing that contributed to make Rehoboam's life an egregious failure, was *his refusal of the advice of men who were older and wiser than himself.* His name will always be identified with the great blunder of preferring the counsel of youthful companions to that of men of years and experience. His folly was the more inexcusable, that he was now no mere beardless lad. He had at least arrived at an age when he ought to have known better. "When I became a man," said Paul, "I put away childish things"; which is more than Rehoboam could have said. He got among a set of empty-headed coxcombs, who filled his mind with vanity, and egged him on to a most silly and ruinous course. Evil companionship proved his destruction. Well might he have said, "Save me from my friends"; for, although we will be charitable enough to believe that they meant their

advice for the best, yet, like the bear which, from friendly motives, tried with his paw to remove a fly from his master's face, they did more harm than good.

Nothing tells upon our life more distinctly than our early choice of companions. We take the colour of the society we keep, as the frogs of Ceylon do that of the leaf on which they sit. Be slow to form your friendships. Endeavour first to take the measure of every man who courts your company.

To such of you especially as have but lately come up to town, I say, Be on your guard. You will have no difficulty in making acquaintances, if you are willing to take to your bosom all who come. There are plenty of vampires in London, who are ready to suck out of you all they can, and then let you go. Remember, leeches fasten on the living, but drop off from the dead. Shakespeare gives you wholesome warning when he says—

> "Every one that flatters thee
> Is no friend in misery;
> Words are easy, like the wind
> Faithful friends are hard to find;
> Every man will be thy friend,
> Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend;
> But if store of crowns be scant,
> No man will supply thy want."

I would particularly urge you to have nothing to do with any one—no matter how plausible and smart he be—who jests at sacred things. The frivolous mocker is a despicable character. A youth devoid of reverence is always a poor specimen. Give a wide berth to every low-bred fellow who sneers at the Bible, and turns religion to ridicule. Keep clear of any man who turns the Sabbath into a holiday, who forsakes the house of God, and laughs

at the strait-laced piety of his forefathers. Be certain you will get no good from one who wants to shake you out of what he calls your old-fashioned principles. A man of that character—let alone religion—has none of the qualities of a gentleman. There is no robber on the midnight street that can impoverish you, like the man who steals from you your faith. Never make a friend of one who avows himself an unbeliever. The fear of God is at the root of all true nobleness of character. Said a French monarch, when once asked to give his consent to a dishonourable treaty, "The blood of Charlemagne is in my veins; and who dares to propose this thing to me?" and there are many of you that have a pedigree still more worthy to glory in; see that ye do not play false by its traditions. We want no Rehoboams amongst us; we want the sons to be *better than their fathers*. I know that I am speaking just now to some who have a hard battle to fight, and to others who are in the deepest waters of trouble: alike for strength and comfort, I point you both to my Lord Jesus Christ. He is the young man's Friend. The life He spent on earth was the life of a young man. Though as God the "Ancient of Days," as man He never knew what it was to be old. He is in full sympathy with you. Commit your souls to Him. Come to Him at once for pardon and eternal life. And, when every stream of earthly joy is dry, and the poor world fails to fill the dreary emptiness of your soul, you will find, that, unlike Christless worldlings, you are rich indeed—

> "At life's clear well-spring you shall drink,
> Rejoicing in the smile of God."

Amen.

A HEART NOT FIXED.

"And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord."

2 CHRON. xii. 14.

IV.

A HEART NOT FIXED.

THE life of Rehoboam, as we have seen, was a complete failure; and the text tells us what the secret of that failure was. For this reason it is worth your study, for I presume every one of you has some ambition to live a purposeful and successful life. If you have not this ambition, why then I must try to awaken it within you: for without it I shall have very little purchase power in stirring you up to what is noble and right.

Surely, none of you are content to live an aimless, ignoble existence, a sort of vegetable, or, at best, a mere animal life: and then to die like a dog, and be forgotten. I have too high an opinion of those I am addressing, to imagine any such thing.

Remember, the success or failure of a life does not depend upon the number of its years, nor upon the social status of the man. Rehoboam reached nearly threescore, and occupied a throne, yet lived to no purpose, accomplished no good whatever, and went down

> "To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
> Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung;"

while many a youth, in the humblest rank, and not one-third his age, has completed a profitable and useful career.

I trust most of you have a long and happy future before you in this world; but I want to put you on the way of securing that, whatever be the length of your life, it

shall at least be, in the highest sense of the word, a success. Rehoboam went blundering on through life, from its commencement to its close (so far as we know anything of him), with no mind of his own, destitute of common sense, "a square man in a round hole," offending his friends, exasperating his enemies, weakening his kingdom, entailing upon his successors unnumbered troubles, and only too well illustrating one of his father's proverbs, "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar amongst wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." He was a man who had the unfortunate knack of saying the wrong word, and doing the wrong thing at critical moments, when much depended on him; and so his reign proved to be rather a curse than a blessing, and when it ended there were none to lament him. It is possible his mental endowments were not of the first order, and I suspect his domestic environments were not in his favour; but the grand secret of his life's ignominious failure is given us in these words of our text, "he did evil," or he went wrong, "because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord."

Ah! many is the young man I have seen come to grief through precisely the same cause, and therefore I want you to look into the matter with me, and, by the help of God, escape the fatal blunder.

If you turn to the margin of your Bibles, you will find that the text reads thus—"He fixed not his heart upon the Lord," and this expression will be the keynote of my address this evening. It is a remarkable expression, and is found only in connection with two names in Scripture. I refer to Rehoboam, and to his grandfather, King David. David made the term peculiarly his own. He repeats it with remarkable emphasis, saying in the 57th Psalm, and again

in the 108th, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed"; whilst in the 112th Psalm, which is a portrait of the righteous man, he says, "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

It was a favourite expression then of the Royal Psalmist: and I think it not unlikely that the writer of these Chronicles had this in mind, and meant to draw a contrast between the character of Rehoboam and his far worthier ancestor: as though he would say, in summing up his career, he was a failure and a ne'er-do-weel, *because*, unlike his godly grandsire, *he did not fix his heart upon the Lord.*

Religion is not a matter that can be taken up in a loose, careless, slip-shod manner. It claims the whole purpose and energy of the heart, and only then will it prove a blessing and a power in life, when a man makes it his first and supreme concern.

There is a passage in Bunyan's immortal allegory which may suggest a suitable arrangement of our thoughts this evening, as we try to see what it is to have the heart fixed upon the Lord. I daresay many of you remember that in the story of the "Pilgrim's progress" Christian is represented as arriving, in the course of his journey, at a palace called "Beautiful," which "was built by the Lord of the hill for the relief and security of pilgrims." There he was very kindly entertained, and fell into profitable conversation with three excellent damsels, named Prudence, Piety, and Charity. After Piety had addressed to him some questions regarding the commencement of his spiritual life, and how he was first led to set out for the heavenly city, Prudence wished to know from him how he was enabled to overcome his temptations, and to persevere in the good and holy way. Christian's answer

is interesting and suggestive. "When I think what I saw at the cross, that will do it; when I look upon my broidered coat, that will do it; when I look into the roll that I carry in my bosom, that will do it; and when my thoughts wax warm about whither I am going, that will do it." Pilgrim's reply, then, was fourfold, as he told how his heart was "fixed" in the ways of God; and I cannot do better than follow in the line of the great dreamer's allegory.

I. The first condition of a fixed heart is *a sight of the Cross.* I take it for granted that no serious and thoughtful man can enjoy anything like comfort and repose of soul until he has found forgiveness of sin; and that is only to be realized by looking on the crucified Redeemer. The world's religion ends with forgiveness; God's religion begins with it. You are ready to imagine—and Satan encourages the belief—that if you live a fairly respectable life, do not altogether forget the soul, keep free from grosser forms of vice, and offer up an occasional prayer, it will come right in the end, you will at last obtain Divine pardon, and admission into the Kingdom. This is the vague notion that has taken possession of thousands, who take for granted that in the long run it will all turn out well, but feel no pressing necessity to have a full and immediate absolution.

This, my dear brothers, is simply turning the Gospel upside down. The first point in religion is to get into a right relationship with God; till that is done, you have not even entered on the Christian life. In His infinite mercy He invites you to meet Him beside the cross; and only when you have done so, and have there obtained the remission of your sins, do you begin the new and better life.

I need not tell you what "the cross" means. It speaks of Christ's cruel, ignominious, and substitutionary death. It wraps up, within the compass of one monosyllable, the great doctrine of vicarious sacrifice. Christ met His death by crucifixion, because it was at once the most painful and humiliating of all methods of destroying life. He might have been cast headlong from a rocky cliff, or drowned in the sea, or burned at the stake, or beheaded on the block, or hung upon the gallows, or thrust through with a spear; but not one of these deaths was so shameful and agonising as that of crucifixion; and so we read that "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

On that cross He took your place and mine. He suffered in our room. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

And the first step which a sinner takes in his return to God is to look believingly on that crucified Saviour, and say, "Jesus stood in my stead; He bore the curse for me; I am free."

You see I stick to the old-fashioned Gospel; and I defy any man, without a twisting and perversion of Scripture, to escape from this doctrine of substitution, which, in these days, in many quarters, has become so unpopular, just because man's proud reason rises up against it. Verily, "the offence of the cross" has not ceased. You will find all manner of ingenious endeavours made by clever men to explain away certain passages of the Bible, and to impart to them a meaning in accord with their own rationalistic views; but there is no getting away from the plain teaching of the Word, that

"Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many," that "He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God," and that "he that believeth on Him is justified from all things, from which he could never be justified by the law of Moses."

To this glorious truth I mean to cling. Living, it shall be my comfort and hope, and when I come to die, I shall hang upon it all my eternal expectations.

I want you all to start life on the lines of perfect reconciliation with God. I want you, at the outset of your business career, to have the grand question settled, to have all terror stricken out of the future, and to know that you are safe for eternity. Believe me, there is no sunshine so bright as the smile of God. There is nothing that will impart such solidity to your character, and such strength and dignity to your life, as to know that you are at peace with heaven. Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross; look with faith to the cross, and that peace is yours. Do it now. Believe and be saved. Pay a visit every morning to Calvary. Thus will your heart be fixed.

II. The next thing is to "*look upon your broidered coat.*" A sight of the cross assures me that Christ has paid all my debts, that every score has been wiped out, and that I am no more under condemnation. But I want more than this to establish my heart, and give me confidence before God. I want a faultless righteousness to cover me. With no merits of my own to plead, I want the perfect obedience of another laid to my account.

And this, indeed, has already been given me, if I am a believer in Jesus. If I am benefited by His death, I am also benefited by His life. If I have faith to say He died for me, I am also able to say He lived for me. During all

those years of His earthly sojourn, He was showing how it was possible for one in human form to keep without flaw or imperfection the commandments of God; and He was weaving a garment of righteousness, a fair and beautiful robe, with which the sinner who believes might be invested. As Paul says, the righteousness is "unto all and upon all them that believe." It is a robe "without seam, woven from the top throughout," and is provided for every one who accepts God's method of salvation. Count Zinzendorf pointed to it when a hundred years ago, as translated by John Wesley, he wrote:—

"Jesus, Thy robe of righteousness
My beauty is, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in this array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

It is a very precious doctrine to a Christian, that, through the imputation to him of Christ's obedience, he is righteous before God. In virtue of his union by faith to the Redeemer, it is not more true that his sins are laid on Jesus, than that the righteousness of Jesus is laid on him. As my sin did not become less odious and punishable when laid on Jesus, but crushed Him down even to the bitterness of death, so His righteousness when laid on me does not lose a vestige of its purity, but makes me "faultless before the Throne of God." "Thou wast perfect in thy beauty," says the Lord, "through my comeliness, which I put upon thee." Oh, what a fixed and calm assurance it gives to the heart, when, looking to this broidered robe, we can say, "He has covered me with the robe of righteousness."

I remember very well of an incident that occurred a good many years ago, and created a great deal of interest at the time. An Englishman had gone to America, and

after a few years' residence there, had settled in Cuba. It so happened that civil war had broken out, and this man, being suspected of being a spy, had been arrested by the Spanish Government, and was ordered to be shot. Knowing his innocence, the English and American consuls went to the Spanish general, and protested aga nst his action, but in vain. The morning appointed for his execution arrived. All the formal proceedings were gone through, and the soldiers only waited the order to fire. Just at that moment the consuls of England and America suddenly drove up. The former first sprang out of the carriage, bearing with him the Union Jack, the British flag, and wrapped it round the man; then the American consul ran forward and threw over that the star-spangled banner: and, turning to the Spanish officer, they both said, "Fire on these flags, if you dare!" The officer drew back. He was appalled. He knew that behind those flags were two great Governments. The man thus clothed was safe. That gaily-coloured wrapping was a better defence than a sheeting of iron. The accused wanted no other covering than that.

Now, such is "the broidered robe" in which every believer is arrayed: and to realise that you are thus invested does more than anything else to inspire the heart with a fearless confidence.

III. In order to fix his heart, Bunyan's pilgrim looked also oftentimes into the *roll which he carried in his bosom*. I need not tell you that that roll is the Word of God. It is not without significance that the immortal Dreamer represents Christian as carrying this Book with him, and very near his heart; for it is a feature of every converted man that he dearly loves his Bible. Habitual study of the Holy Scriptures is indispensable to a healthy condition of

the soul. You must daily read this peerless volume as your only infallible guide through the wilderness of earth to the eternal city. In difficulty it will direct you; in trial it will comfort you; in temptation it will strengthen you; in loneliness and depression it will talk with you and cheer you. There is no book like the Bible; none that speaks to us with such tone of authority; none that so searches the heart; none that so lifts us up into the presence of the unseen and Divine. Here you find counsels, commands, promises, warnings, fitting you for all occasions and at every turn. If your Bible remains day by day a closed book, I do not wonder that you fall into sin, and that every right feeling is like to die out of you. You should never go to business without first consulting this heavenly oracle. McCheyne would not speak to any one in the morning till he had first of all heard the voice of God. It gives a tone to the whole day when we begin the day with Him. Of course, if your soul is not in a gracious state, if you are not in thorough sympathy with the Book, if you have no spiritual tastes and yearnings, the mere perusal of a chapter will do you little good. Do not take up your Testament as though in the letter of it there were some wondrous charm to soothe your spirit, and make you proof against the annoyances and irritations of the day: or you will be grievously disappointed. But if, with a soul resting in the love of God, you dip into His Word to get a message of comfort and guidance, you will find, like Christian, that it gives strength to your heart and stability to your character.

It is a pleasant feature of our time that so many laymen are diligent students of Scripture. I have sometimes noticed young men hurrying to the city of a morning, snatching a glance of their well-thumbed pocket Bible;

and there are godly merchants not a few, who have a corner in their office desk for this marvellous and matchless volume. Young men, if you would be fortified for your daily work and trial, "let the Word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom.'

IV. There is yet one point more; "*When his thoughts waxed warm about whither he was going,*" that gave fixedness to Christian's heart. It could not do otherwise to one who was a pilgrim, passing through a strange land. If we were more mindful of our pilgrim state, we would think more of the better country.

In early manhood we are specially liable to be so absorbed with the affairs of earth that we scarcely think of heaven. It seems far away in the dreamy distance, so vague, and shadowy, and unreal, that its claims have no chance beside those of a present, tangible, busy world: and many of you, I can well believe, are so pressed and driven from morn till night, that you seldom have the opportunity for anything like quiet contemplation.

But the Christian Church has furnished many noble examples of men, who, though in the very whirl of noisy commerce, and like to be overwhelmed (as one might suppose) by the greatness of their success, never seemed to lose sight of the better world on high, and made it their supreme and daily aim to be more ready for that glorious inheritance. A heavenly-minded man is not necessarily a mere pious dreamer or sentimentalist. You may be none the less shrewd as to the interests of time, because you are wise as to the concerns of eternity; like the trusty pilot, who, though his eyes are on the stars, keeps his hand upon the helm.

Ah! when we see what pains men will ungrudgingly

bear, what drudgeries they will submit to, and with what patience they will toil, to secure for themselves a position of comfort in this world, ought not the prospect of that glorious home beyond the hills of time to stir our languid energies, and reconcile us to the ills we have to bear?

I cannot tell you how pleased I was the other day to notice that amongst a noble group of seven who had offered themselves for missionary work in China, and were last week formally set apart to it, were two young men who had been distinguished in athletic sports, one as a champion cricketer, and the other as an oarsman, being, indeed, "stroke-oar" of the Cambridge crew; and to observe the testimony which they gave to the value of the hope that now glowed within their breasts, "the expulsive power," as the late Dr. Chalmers used to say, "of a new affection." "I have been a sort of Jack-of-all-trades," said the former, "and have long been hunting after the best Master; and now, indeed, I have found Him!"

These young men are sacrificing every earthly interest that they may go out among the heathen, and win souls for Christ, and they know how blessed is the reward which the Lord they serve will bestow. Possibly, duty does not call any of you to this particular form of sacrifice; but none the less should your daily life be cheered by the star of celestial hope, as in some substantial way you strive to advance the kingdom of your Redeemer.

"Though earth has still many a beautiful spot,
As a poet or painter might show;
Yet more lovely and beautiful, holy and bright,
Is the hope of the heart, and the spirit's glad sight,
In the land which no mortal can know.

"There the water of life, bursting forth from the throne,
Flows on, and for ever will flow;
Its waves, as they roll, are with melody rife,
And its waters are sparkling with beauty and life,
In the land which no mortal may know.

"Oh! who but must pine, in this dark vale of tears,
From its clouds and its shadows to go,
To walk in the light of the glory above,
And to share in the peace, and the joy, and the love
Of the land which no mortal may know."

Young men! I have tried this evening, dipping my pen in the ink of John Bunyan, to give you, in very simple language, the secret of a fixed heart. Tell me, my brother, would you wish to be a David or a Rehoboam? Is your life to be ruled by one noble purpose, directed toward one end, and made fruitful in blessing, as was that of the Royal Psalmist, "who," as Paul says, "served his generation by the will of God"; or, fickle and irresolute, like his degenerate grandson, are you to drag out an aimless and unprofitable existence? Oh that I could persuade each of you to-night to look for pardon to the cross of Jesus; to enrobe yourself in the raiment of His righteousness; to make the Bible your daily study and delight; and to fix your hope upon a heavenly crown; then should I feel confident that there lay before you here on earth a bright and honourable career, and beyond the river a glorious immortality! Amen.

"As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."—JER. xvii. 11.

V.

RICHES GOTTEN NOT BY RIGHT.

THE illustration is taken from natural history. The Bible is very copious in its ornithology. As you open the book, many are the birds that fly across your field of vision. Stork, and turtle dove, and crane, and swallow, all teach us some lesson. From the little sparrow on the housetop, to the majestic eagle soaring in mid-heaven; from the barn-door hen, cackling over its brood, to the rapacious vulture swooping down upon its prey; every variety of winged creature is here, to point some moral, or suggest some warning. "Ask now the beasts," says Job, "and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee."

Our text wafts us to the breezy uplands of northern Palestine.

The very name of "partridge" is suggestive of gun, and dog, and sportsman's bag, and exhilarating exercise. We seem to breathe the crisp mountain air; we smell the heather and blooming gorse, and hear the whirr, as a covey of timid birds is startled by our approach. I dare-say some of you young men are good shots, and have brought down a bird or two in your day. I have tried my hand at it too, but neither pheasant nor partridge was ever much the worse for my powder. In the East partridges are hunted with the hawk, and the feudal chiefs of the country keep up, with great pride, the ancient sport of falconry. They go out on horseback, holding the trained bird on the wrist, whilst the woods are filled with retainers,

beating about and shouting, to start the poor birds and drive them towards them. When near enough, the falcon is launched from the hand, and pounces down upon his helpless victim, bears it off, and after flying about for a little, as if in pride of triumph, lights upon the ground; whereon the sportsman hastens forward, cuts the throat of the partridge, and allows its captor to suck the blood.

I have referred to this, though it does not bear immediately upon the illustration in our text, because it throws light on the only other passage in Scripture in which this bird is mentioned. I cannot say, of course, that the Jews of ancient times were acquainted with falconry; but the words of David, when persecuted by Saul, are quite in keeping with the supposition:—"Now, therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord; for the King of Israel is come out to seek me, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains."

Some think that the prophet's language in our text refers to an ancient practice still maintained amongst the Arabs, of driving the mother birds from place to place till they become exhausted, and are easily captured: in which case, of course, the poor partridge never has the joy of seeing her own progeny. Patiently has she sat for weeks in her nest, over eggs which another than herself is to hatch.

Let me frankly say I do not think this is the intended idea at all. On looking into the Septuagint, I find the rendering of the verse somewhat different, but practically the same as many of you will find in the margin of your Bibles. "As the partridge gathereth young which she has not herself brought forth." That is more plain and natural, and is a rendering supported by some of the highest authorities.

The idea plainly is that the partridge is in the habit of

stealing eggs from the nests of other birds of a different species, and of sitting upon them: and that, shortly after these eggs are hatched, the young, forsaking their false parent, and associating with birds of their own order, make the old partridge look very foolish, as all her promising brood desert her.

I am told by a friend who has himself witnessed the performance, that, in point of fact, it is not an uncommon thing for a bird to carry off eggs from another nest. This sort of bird builds its nest on the ground: and the sly thief, by a skilful use of its bill, rolls the eggs along, and contrives to place them in her own nest.

Those of you who have been brought up in the country have, no doubt, often been reminded of the prophet's illustration in the text. For my own part, I know I have laughed right out at the astonishment and dismay of a respectable-looking farmyard hen, standing by the edge of a large pond, when a whole brood of tiny ducklings she has hatched and tended with motherly care plunge into their natural element, the water, and seem to say to their foster-parent, "Follow us, if you can!"

Like that poor helpless and confounded biped is the man who gathers to himself riches he has not lawfully earned. When he is most in need of them, they take their departure, and, for all the worldly wisdom of which he had boasted, he stands out in the end an arrant "fool." Yes, a fool; for, saith Jesus, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

I was requested by an esteemed friend to address you this evening on these words of Jeremiah; and I gladly do so, for they deserve to be well pondered by all of you. You are all engaged in making money, or at least in trying to do it, on a smaller or greater scale: and the prophet solutions you against a mode of money-making which gives

a man no security of happiness now, and in the long run stamps him as a fool.

Three things—

I. First of all, observe, that *the Bible has nothing to say against a man's getting rich by just and honourable means.* The pietistic slang sometimes heard in certain quarters against the acquisition of wealth, has no encouragement in the Word of God. Scripture nowhere asserts, as it is sometimes misquoted, that "money is the root of all evil." On the contrary, it declares "money is a defence," and "money answereth all things." In spite of all that is said against it, it is a powerful instrument in procuring enjoyment, and in doing good: and if it comes to you honourably, and goes from you usefully, it is one of the greatest blessings you can possess. The need of it, and a moderate desire for it, form a most valuable incentive to industry. We would not be assured that "the blessing of the Lord maketh rich," if wealth were necessarily an evil. The good old-fashioned Shorter Catechism, which many of you learned in childhood, very truly states, that "the eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others," and that it "forbiddeth whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth."

A fine healthy sight it is we may see every morning in London, the thousands of young men pressing in to the city on 'bus or car, or better still, on their own two feet, eager for business, and determined to get on. The lad who has no such ardour is not half a man, and does not deserve to succeed. By all means throw yourselves heartily into your work; go at it with all the vigour and all the brains you possess, and God grant you may be merchant princes some day!

Mark, I mean it. I have known young men here within

the last twenty years, with their £60 or £70 a year, whose prospects were no better than yours, but who worked hard, stuck to their business, and *wrote a good clear hand;* and now their signature is worth thousands of pounds.

Diligence in business is one of the prime virtues of human life upon the earth, but the motive power which impels it is the expectation of gain. To be altogether indifferent to material profit, so far from being a recommendation, betokens an unmanly and defective character. You ought to wish to increase your substance, if God will give you grace to use it well. Existence on the earth becomes a better and more desirable thing when industry has had its reward, and a man finds himself in possession of the garnered fruits of his labour. Enlarging wealth expands your power for good, it multiplies your opportunities, and helps to gild your earthly life with refinement and comfort. Rich men may be not only good men, but the best of men, and you do not need to go out of the city of London to find it so. I could name to you successful merchants, who are worth their hundreds of thousands, and yet are as humble, devout, active, Christian men as are to be found within the land. They have gotten riches by right, and have God's blessing on them.

Such men are not lifted up by the pride of wealth, which is about the meanest of all pride. They keep mammon in its own place, and turn it to good purposes.

Christian wealth is clean money. Spiritually, thank God, many a camel has gone through the eye of a needle! The notion that poverty is better than riches might commend itself to the ancient anchorite, or the mediæval philosopher, but it will not go down with modern intelligence. If you have to take a twelve hours' journey by rail, you will, no doubt, reach your destination as quickly if you sit in the guard's van as if you lounge in a first-class

carriage; but I cannot see anything to admire in the Spartan indifference to comfort of the man who prefers hard boards to cushioned ease. In Boswell's "Life of Johnson," it is mentioned that on one occasion, when making a tour in the Western Highlands, the doctor landed on the bleak island of Coll in the Hebrides, and, having entered a miserable hut, filled with smoke and squalor, his first exclamation was, as he turned up his nose in disgust, "*Et hoc secundum sententiam philosophorum est esse beatus*"—"And this, in the opinion of philosophers, is happiness!"

No man could sing with sweeter grace than Robert Burns of the charms of humble cottar life; yet we find him writing, "Poverty, thou half-sister of death, thou cousin-german of hell, where shall I find force of execration equal to the amplitude of thy demerits?"

It is all very well to moralise on the duty of being contented with our lot, but there is a certain "contentment with our lot" that simply means indolence, and stupidity, and the lack of enterprise. I do not hesitate to say that I have known young men who were only *too* contented with their lot; they had no ambition, no desire to rise, no energy, no pluck, no spirit. The wish to get riches is not a sinful wish; nay, it may be a most laudable one, and, as I have said, a useful stimulus to industry. Hence, it is by no means a good thing for a man to have been "born with a silver spoon in his mouth"; it may, indeed, make him the envy of others, but his moral dangers are enormously increased thereby.

It was my privilege, many years ago, when residing in Manchester, to be acquainted with one who was not only a noble specimen of a man himself, but one of the best friends of young men the Church of England ever produced; I refer to the late Canon Stowell, and his testimony was this:—"Throughout a very long experience, I have

seldom known a young man succeed in life who began with a little independency, or who had a certain prospect of it from his father or some other relative. That little independency! how often has it betrayed into irresolution or sluggishness."

I don't pity you in the least, my young brothers, if you have had to begin life without a halfpenny; so long as you have good brains, sound health, high principle, and a fair opening, I have no fear of you; stick to your work; push on; go ahead; and may God prosper you!

II. We learn from the text, in the second place, that *riches unrighteously gotten are no blessing.*

There are many ways in which you may violate the spirit of the eighth commandment, without robbing the till, or forging a cheque, or making a false entry in the cash-book.

I do not for a moment insinuate that any of you are capable of direct acts of dishonesty, or are at all likely to be informed "you are wanted," as a policeman lays his hand upon your shoulder, and leads you off to gaol.

And yet, how distressingly often do we hear of a case in which all the advantages of a pious upbringing have failed, and a youth of promise has plunged into a career of larceny and crime! But even though you should never expose yourself to the vengeance of the law, there are many ways in which you may be under temptation to do what is not strictly honourable, and what a pure and sensitive conscience must condemn.

Do let me entreat you, my young friends, to be straightforward and open in everything; let your conduct and character be above the shadow of suspicion; let truthfulness and honesty be a very law of your being; condescend to nothing which conscience does not thoroughly approve; have an instinctive horror of everything approaching duplicity or equivocation; hate a lie as you hate death;

and let your whole action in business be such that you can invite the eye of God to search you through, confident that all is straight and right. To your master or employer show the utmost fidelity: let him see that you are loyal to his interests, and eager to promote them; be scrupulously correct in your accounts, even to a halfpenny; make it clear that you are conscientious, not merely in regard to money, but in regard also to time, talent, attention, everything; show that you are true to the backbone; thoroughly reliable; stoop to no shams or white lies or evasions; and let it be seen that you will rather throw up your appointment than make the smallest compromise of veracity or honour.

Ah! believe me, gentlemen, such a character is the grandest capital in the long run: as John Bright wrote the other day to a young man who applied to him for advice:—"In my judgment the value of a high character for strict honour and honesty in business can hardly be estimated too highly; and it will often stand for more in the conscience, and even in the ledger, than all that can be gained by shabby and dishonest transactions."

But there are thousands of men "getting riches, not by right," who are not much troubled in conscience, and who bear a respectable name.

I should certainly group under the class described in the text all who make money *by betting transactions*. Gloss it over as you will, there is not a question that gambling is a crime against society and against God. A man has no right to a sixpence procured in this way. Once a young man begins to bet, even for small sums, and in a playful way, he is on a slippery incline, and God only knows where he will land. There is a good deal of commercial gambling that never goes by that name.

I don't mean to say that there is not a legitimate

speculation. Nearly every merchant is, in some sense, a speculator. I cannot see why a man may not fairly benefit by his brains; and if he is shrewd enough to mark the fluctuations of the markets, and sharp enough to predict coming changes, I see no reason why he should not make profit thereby, whether he deal in stocks, or in sugar, or coals, or leather, or hardware. If you stop all speculation, you will soon shut up the factories, close the banks, destroy the shipping interest, and arrest the financial progress of the country. This may be; but every one knows that there is a great deal of rash and iniquitous speculation with money which the speculator does not possess; and that the innocent are constantly made to suffer for the guilty.

Of course, the man has his chance of good luck; but if in this way he "get riches," it is "not by right"; the process of financial incubation may for a time seem to be going on well, but by-and-by, in all likelihood, when the egg-shells burst, the fortunes he had looked for take wings and fly away, leaving the nest empty, and the poor disappointed man nothing better than "a fool."

Believe me, gentlemen, it is our Maker's design that wealth should be begotten of industry; real hard work. There is no royal road to opulence, and, as Solomon said nearly three thousand years ago, "he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." To make money rapidly, even by honest means, is perilous: how much more so by questionable methods?

It seems to the rogue, wrote Thomas Carlyle, that he has found out a short north-west passage to wealth, but he soon discovers that fraudulence is not only a crime but a blunder. Sin never pays. Said a pawky Scotch farmer to his son, "John, honesty's the best policy; I've tried both ways mysel."

There is a great deal of money made in trade, which, it must be confessed, is gotten not by right. Too often there is one code of virtue for the home circle, and another code for the factory or shop. One system of morals for the Sunday, another for the weekday. Violations of rectitude, which would be severely condemned in the family, are winked at in business.

Almost every article that money can buy must yield its percentage of imposture. Adulterations everywhere. Goods ticketed with false labels. Imperfections and flaws painted over. Such titles as "warranted," "fast colours," "all wool," "genuine gold," attached to goods that are known to be rubbish. On all sides we see work scamped or carelessly executed; brick walls you are afraid to lean against, lest they tumble over; front doors between whose panels the postman may push your letters, without troubling to ring the bell; mantelpieces you must prop up with a chair, lest they fall inwards; ceilings crumbling down, so that you must sit with an open umbrella overhead; and fifty other evidences of a lamentable unconscientiousness.

Remember, the clerk or workman who connives at his master's dishonesty, is himself equally guilty; and though every year may mark an increase to his salary or wages, he has no Divine blessing on his gains.

When we come to the strict standard of God's law, we shall find a vast deal more unrighteousness in the mercantile world than most of us are willing to allow. Strange as it may seem, thousands of men are far more ready to be benevolent than just. Mr. Gladstone, in one of his speeches, sagaciously observed, "I would almost dare to say there are five generous men for one just man. The passions will often ally themselves with generosity, but they always tend to divert from justice."

You cannot be too particular in seeing to it, that every penny you make is money got "by right." You cannot be too scrupulous in regard to the straightforwardness of all your business transactions. Why, the late George Moore, the rich magnate of Bow Churchyard, would throw all the clerks in his great establishment into a ferment because a 'bus fare of threepence had been charged, for which no voucher could be found. This was not because he was mean or shabby, but because a principle was involved: and it was the same to him whether it was a threepenny-piece or £300. "Be just, and fear not."

On the highest authority I assure you that, "the little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked," and, as the poet says—

> ". . . the honest man,
> Simple of heart, prefers inglorious want
> To ill-got wealth."

Before coming to the last point, I wish you younger men would just let me give you two hints.

Well, I am quite in a line with the text when I advise you to practise *frugality*. Don't spend all your earnings; cultivate thrift. Every young man who is drawing a salary should open an account with a savings bank. However small the sum, it will grow; and the tendency will be to develop in you self-denial, economy, and forethought. The time may come when you will thank God you "laid by" a little against a rainy day. Franklin used to say that "economy in youth makes an easy chair for old age." I will go so far as to say that if you spend your all whilst you could lay aside a part, you are not honest, for, ten to one, others will be taxed by-and-by to help you in your straits. I would not have you narrow or stingy, like old Elwes, who always puts out his candle when talking to a

friend, to save the light; but there is a great difference between being saving and being parsimonious.

It was sound advice which Ben Jonson gave:—

> "Learn to be wise, and practise how to thrive:
> That would I have you do: and not to spend
> Your coin on every bauble that you fancy,
> Or every foolish brain that humours you."

Then I would also suggest to you the wisdom, nay, the duty, of effecting, at as early a date as possible, an *insurance on your life*. Please don't come to me, as many a man does, and ask me to recommend an office, for I hold no agency; that is not my business; but it is my business to recommend a step so judicious, and I will even add, so Scriptural in principle. When Jacob was bargaining with Laban about terms, he showed the sagacity that has ever been characteristic of his posterity; he was not going to remain in Laban's service without fair wages; "and now," he added, "when shall I provide for mine own house also?" You may say you have no household to provide for, and you don't intend to marry. That is all very well just now, and that is what hundreds of young men have said before; but the time comes when a subtle influence overpowers you, and you go straight to the goldsmith's to buy the ring; and, sure enough, all the other steps and responsibilities follow. Well, you will spare yourselves a good deal of anxiety in after life, if you will just go this week to some trustworthy office, and take the step I am urging. I would almost go so far as to say that the small yearly sum it will now involve is not your own; if you spend it on unnecessary comforts, you may "leave them in the midst of your days, and at your end may be a fool."

III. I have only to add, in the last place, that, as the text teaches, *the penalty on the acquisition of unrighteous gain*

generally follows even in this life. Perhaps this does not hold so markedly in our times as under the Old Dispensation, because immortality, with its just retribution, is now more clearly revealed. Still, no thoughtful person can fail to see how often a terrible Nemesis pursues the fraudulent man, even "in the midst of his days," and how, "at his end," even the world styles him "a fool." Some unexpected turn comes, some monetary crisis, some commercial disaster, and, lo! all his hoarded gains take wing and fly away, and the unprincipled man is left like the silly partridge, to sit disconsolate in an empty nest!

But though the money abide with him, there may be wretchedness untold, and he is ready to curse the gold that promised so much happiness, and now yields so little. Think of these solemn words from the old Book:—"How often is the candle of the wicked put out!" "The wicked shall not live out half their days." "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again." "Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire."

Ill-gotten wealth will never make its owner really happy. There are plutocrats in this city whose tables are covered with silver plate, who drink their sparkling champagne, and roll along the streets in their sumptuous carriages, whose lives are unutterably miserable. A worm is gnawing at the root. Their fortune has been built upon a basis of deception, bringing with it deep, unutterable remorse; and though friends may flatter, an upbraiding voice from the unseen is ever whispering in their ear one little word of four letters—and two of them the same—"Fool!"

Young men! I cannot content myself with entreating you, as I have done, to be sternly upright in character, inflexible in principle, and strictly honourable and straight-

forward in the smallest details of your business transactions; there is needed something more than this, if you would be truly rich, and would enjoy the smile and blessing of Heaven.

Oh, I cannot be too urgent in imploring you to seek for better treasure than the best that earth can yield!

The wise man feels that it is not enough to be endowed for time; in order to be happy he must also be endowed for eternity.

> "On all he has there still remains impress'd
> One truth conspicuous—This is not my rest:
> From that Divine remembrance ever springs
> A moderated care for earthly things."

Do not forget, my dear brothers, that your best possessions, even now, are things which cannot be weighed in a scale, nor measured by a rule; they are treasures which rust cannot tarnish, nor thieves carry away. It was a noble declaration of Marcus Aurelius, "My dominions are greater *within* than without"; and if this was the utterance of a heathen monarch, what ought a Christian to feel? Only let a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ put you into connection with the riches of His grace, and let there burn within you the hope of a glorious immortality; *then*, I hesitate not to say, your fortune is made; you have the guarantee of peace and plenty here, and the promise of a blessed inheritance hereafter!

These are plain words: but you are too generous not to receive them in the spirit in which they are offered. Your temptations, confessedly, are great: but "God is able to make you stand." Never fall in with the odious conception which I have heard expressed, that it is simply impossible in this modern Babylon to maintain a high standard of righteousness, and to prosecute business successfully with a sensitive and scrupulous conscience.

The notion is as false as it is baseless.

I know Christian parents far away who tremble for their sons in the prospect of their coming up to the metropolis, and seldom think of the great city but as of a vortex of iniquity, sucking in to their eternal ruin the youths who yearly are flocking hither from all parts of the land.

Tell them it is an utter mistake. Tell them that even in Pergamos, "where Satan's seat is," God has a host of faithful ones, to whom He says, "I know thy works, that thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith"; assure them that there is here as noble a band of pure and right-minded young men as Christendom ever knew; and that, if Sodom could not point to ten righteous men within her, London can point to ten times ten thousand, who "keep their garments clean." May each of you belong to this blessed band!

PIOUS PATRIOTISM.

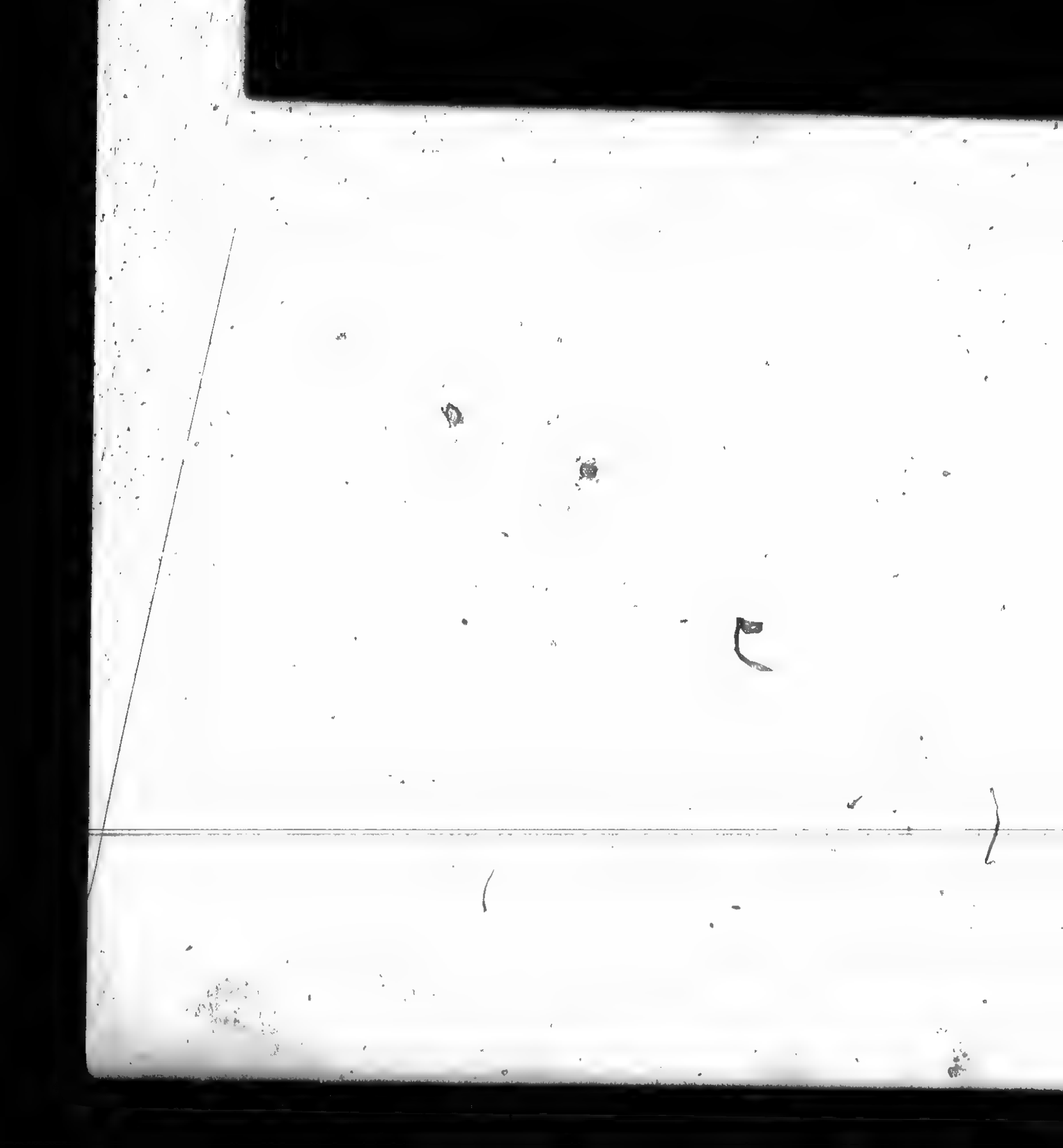
"Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good."

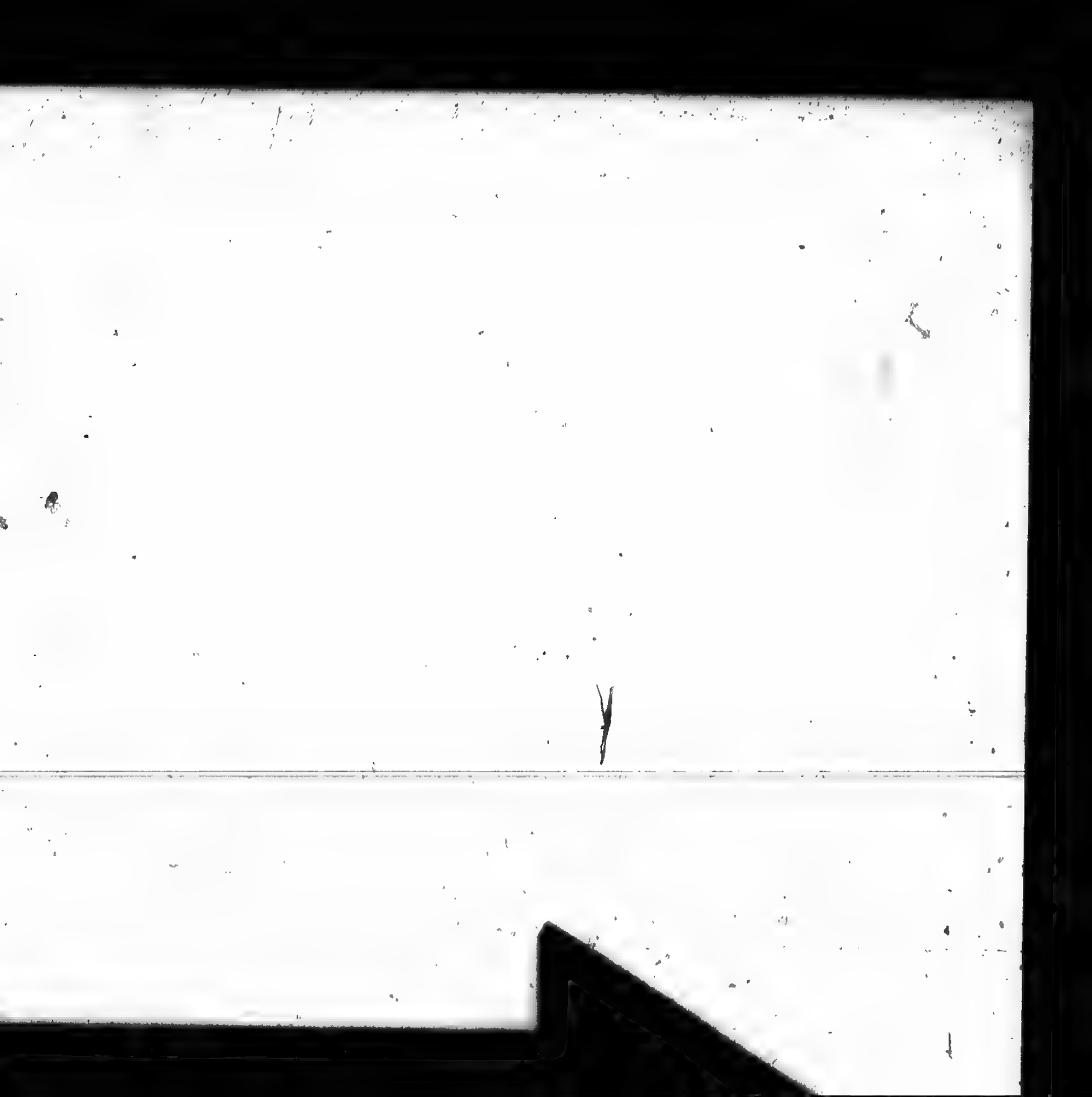
2 SAM. X. 12.

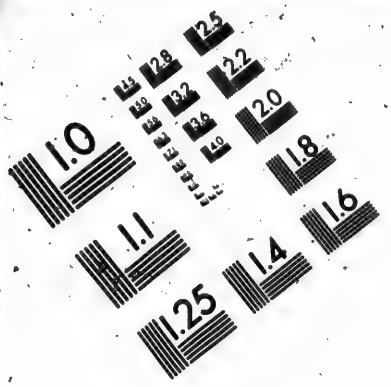
PIOUS PATRIOTISM.

IT is a common saying that boys take after their mother; and undoubtedly it is true of some of the most remarkable men of history, that on the maternal side they came of a strong and noble stock. It was so with the man that uttered these words of our text. He was one of the three sons of Zeruiah, King David's sister. Zeruiah was a lady of vigorous individuality and well-marked character, and possessed not a little of her brother's courage and decision. I do not know who her husband was, and I do not care to know, for plainly he was a nobody, his name not even being once mentioned in the Bible; or shall we be charitable enough to believe that he died early, leaving the widow with her three fine boys, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, who would then naturally come under the special notice and care of their uncle David? Many an orphan youth has owed more than he could ever express to a wise and affectionate uncle; and I hope those of you who are thus indebted, will never forget, nor cease to be grateful for the counsel and help you have thus received.

Of David's three nephews, Asahel, the youngest, was cut off in early life. He was a remarkably handsome boy, and the darling of his mother; and, moreover, was so nimble and light-footed, that they used to call him "the wild gazelle." Abishai, the second son, was a man possessed of many excellent and soldier-like qualities; he was brave, zealous, and devoted, and rose to be one of the first officers in David's army. But, unquestionably, the most







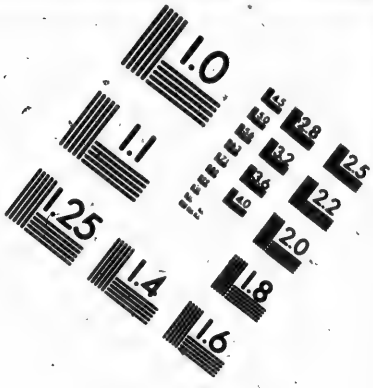
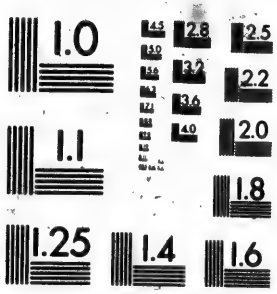
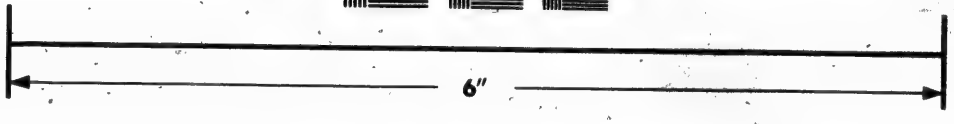
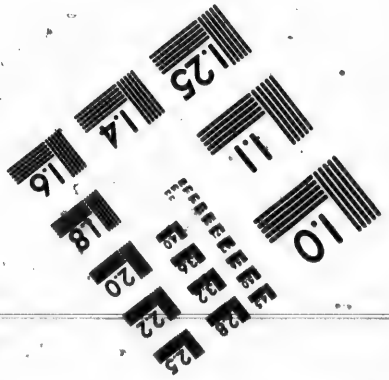


IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)







Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

notable of the three young men was the eldest brother, Joab, who had great force of character, and, indeed, came to be the most prominent figure in the whole history of David's reign. I am not going to occupy your time by pointing out the various good and bad traits in Joab's character; to tell the truth, he had a good many of both; but I will say this, that probably, in the whole course of his life, he never appeared to greater advantage than on the occasion that is described in this chapter.

To make a long story short, the king of a neighbouring and friendly nation had just died; and as he had during his life shbwed some kindness to David, the latter thought he would send a message of sympathy to his son. It seemed a very fitting and considerate act; for never is friendship felt to be more valuable, or sympathy more seasonable, than in a time of bereavement. But mark what occurred. Some of the princes of the King of Ammon were silly enough, and pig-headed enough, to see in David's action a cunning purpose to spy out their land; and they actually succeeded so well in persuading the young monarch that there were hostile intentions towards him, that he basely insulted the ambassadors of David, and sent them away grossly affronted. Of course, an insult like this could not be submitted to; and as no apology was forthcoming, the ultimate issue was a declaration of war.

The Ammonites, probably feeling themselves hardly a match for the people of Israel, sent and hired the Syrians to come and help them; and so the battle was pitched, and preparation made for a bloody and terrific struggle. The enemy disposed themselves into two companies, one of Ammonites, and the other of Syrians; the plan being to charge the forces of Israel at the same moment on the front and on the rear. David's army was led by Joab and his brother Abishai, the former holding the chief

command. Perceiving with a quick eye the design of the enemy, Joab, like a wise general, divided his forces also; the choicest men he took under his own direction to fight the Syrians (whom probably he knew to be the better soldiers), whilst the remainder of the army he put under charge of Abishai, to fight the Ammonites; but, before a single sword was drawn, he looked across to his brother, and in the presence of their men uttered with a loud voice this memorable speech, "If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee: Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people; and for the cities of our God; and let the Lord do that which is good in His sight." From these heroic words we are going to carry away with us four practical lessons this evening.

I. The first is a lesson of *mutual helpfulness*. As occasion demands, says Joab, you will help me, or I will help you. If I am in difficulty, Abishai, you will come to my rescue; if you are in difficulty, I will come to you. He does not assume the airs of the "big brother," and take for granted that he himself will not want any aid; he is neither so vain as to think that he cannot possibly be in need of his brother's help, nor so mean as to dream of standing aloof in a brother's difficulty.

Now, this is a word for us all. God has so ordained that we are mutually dependent on one another; and I hardly know which of the two is worse, the self-conceit of the man who imagines he can stand alone, or the selfishness of the man who has no instinctive desire to help his neighbour when in trouble. Why, away from religion altogether, it is our duty both to lean and to carry; for it is seldom indeed that there is not a stronger than ourselves, who can render us aid; and equally seldom that

there is not a feebler than ourselves, to whom we may do a service. It rarely happens that the various members even of one family, though equally deserving, are equally successful and prosperous in life. Of two brothers, one, it may be, carries all before him, advances from step to step till he gets to the top of the tree; whilst the other, poor fellow, though not less painstaking and industrious, never meets with success.

Why are such things permitted in a world that is under the government of an all-wise God, but to teach us a lesson of interdependence, and make us feel that we are "one body, and every one members one of another." What Joab said to Abishai is just what each of us should say to one another, "If I am in trouble, you will help me; if you are in trouble, I will help you." Too often the sentiment of the world is, "every man for himself,"—the survival, if not of the fittest, at least of the strongest. Let the bold and lithe push to the front, and the wea[redacted] to the wall.

There is a great deal of this in busin[redacted]s some of you well know; certain men, elbowing and driving forward, not caring whom they push over or trample under their feet, if only they are successful themselves. The result is that many a good, able, worthy fellow, simply because he has not the audacity, the impudence, of others, is left behind and gets disheartened.

Now it is here that Christian principle should come in, balancing and regulating the various elements at work, giving confidence to the weak and generosity to the strong, and so securing the largest amount of success and happiness. Do not tell me that it is to their own discredit that some men are not successful. I say there are cases in which want of success is no discredit whatever; just as there are other cases in which remarkable prosperity is not due to any exceptional worth or ability.

The former are not to think that it is any degradation to them to receive help, nor the latter that it is any prodigious act of benevolence to impart it; if God has made me poor, He means me to receive; if rich, He means me to bestow. If Joab has to come to the help of Abishai, Abishai has no more reason to be ashamed than Joab.

My brethren, we can do a great deal to help one another; and nowhere is such mutual assistance more needed than in London. If you, sir, are lucky enough to have a good berth, see what you can do for this good friend who is out of a situation; and if, on the other hand, you are yourself in difficulties, do not hesitate a moment to tell us how we can assist you.

But there are other ways in which the Joabs and the Abishais may help one another. There are intellectual, moral, spiritual conflicts, in which the strong may assist the weak. For aught I know, there may be some brother here this evening on whom the Syrians of infidelity or the Ammonites of sensual temptation have come down with overwhelming force, so that he is like to be clean swept away from all truth and virtue; and what could be a nobler or more Christ-like act on the part of some of you, young men, "who are strong, and have the Word of God abiding in you, and have overcome the wicked one," than to stand by our tempted friend, and assist him to beat back the foe?

II. The second lesson we learn from the text is a lesson of *manly heroism*, "Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly." Never on field of battle did officer shout across to brother officer a nobler sentiment. The army has, indeed, produced some grand men, heroes in the truest sense of the word. The word "hero," which,

perhaps, expresses our loftiest conception of moral grandeur, comes from a Greek word of the same root as the Latin *vir*, a man. So that a hero is a man, in the fullest, largest sense of the word. I do not know that our country has ever produced a man of greater courage, or who has behaved himself more valiantly, than the extraordinary soldier who, at the command of his Queen, went forth at a moment's notice to endeavour to rectify matters in the Soudan. General Gordon, of Chinese reputation, is an admirable study for young men. I shall refer, later on, to his ardent piety, but even in the matter of a courage that knows no fear, and a devotion to his country in which self is absolutely forgotten, I question if England has ever produced his like. When only fifty-one years of age, he had achieved exploits sufficient to fill volumes, and make a place for himself in history; and yet his dauntless intrepidity was only equalled by his peerless modesty. Keeping in the background, and always courting obscurity, he obstinately refused to accept the honours and rewards to which he was entitled; his favourite expression being, "I am only a chisel which cuts the wood, while the Great Carpenter directs it." In his great military undertakings in China, at the head of a small but valiant army, he did not even carry a musket or a sword, but always went into action armed with a small cane, with which he would stand calmly under the hottest fire, pointing to the spots he wished attacked, and encouraging his men by voice and gesture. The soldiers christened that cane "Gordon's wand of victory," and came to believe that, amid a very hailstorm of bullets, their charmed commander was invulnerable. He seemed not to know what fear was; and, on one occasion, as he was leading a storming party, and saw his men beginning to waver under a terrific fire, he turned cheerfully round, stood still, and calmly lighted a cigar.

He then waved his cane, and the men came up with a rush and carried the position.

But, gentlemen, I would not for a moment wish to convey the impression that heroes are confined to campaigns and battlefields. I venture to assert that in the commonest spheres of civil and prosaic life may be found instances of an equally noble, though less showy, heroism. There are heroes of the workshop, of the counter, of the office, of the market-place, on whose courage may be put as severe a strain as though they stood upon the field of battle, amid the glitter of cold steel and the rattle of musketry. When a man has to fight with poverty, with losses, with bad debts, with disappointments, with temptations: and still keeps his head to the wind, battles on bravely, refuses to knock under, vows still to "trust in God and do the right," I say, though he has no epaulettes on his shoulders, nor medals on his breast, he is as truly a man and a hero, as though he had stormed a citadel. Oh dear, what awful battles, never dreamt of perhaps by friends and acquaintances, have been fought by many a young man in this city, fought in these streets, up those stairs, behind those window-blinds! God only knows how stern has been the conflict through which some of you have passed.

Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves," would be an excellent motto for the *employés* in many a London establishment. You want the "courage" of your principles, and then no fear of your "behaviour." When a man's life is dominated by the one aim, not to make money, not to find idle pleasure, but to please his Master in heaven, it is wonderful how much respect he commands, and how much pure inward happiness he enjoys. On the other hand, if your supreme object is to get rich, then, even though that object be secured,

the happiness and respect will not come with it; and you will find, when it is too late to repair the blunder, that your whole life has been a huge mistake. The ancient Greek legend tells us of King Midas, that he amassed a great heap of gold, but that he offended Apollo, the god of learning; the consequence being—so runs the story—that his ears grew extraordinarily long. Now this is just what I have myself observed, in the case of persons who had no other thought from Monday to Saturday, than to make money, that they became singularly asinine in character, and were devoid of all those qualities that impart nobleness and dignity to man.

III. The third lesson we take away with us from our subject is a lesson of *true patriotism*. Listen again to General Joab: "Be of good courage, brother, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God." Now you will notice the motive which he adduced. Some men, no doubt, have exposed their lives to danger, and done deeds of daring, with a view to personal preferment and self-interest. They have had "an eye to business," as the saying is; and have been prepared to face the greatest dangers, in the chance of coming off victorious, and ultimately being well rewarded for their toil. We have so deluged with *éclat* our successful generals, and fêted and feasted them, and voted them thousands a year, that there is really very little glory now attaching to great military or naval exploits. When men are so handsomely paid for the risks they run, I do not see that there is anything very heroic in their conduct. But mark the motive which Joab addressed to his brother. "For our people and for the cities of our God." Bravo! ye sons of Zeruiah! "God and our country" was their cry. It was no empty, silly Jingo shout, like that which we have heard in our own day from a hysteric rabble that clamour for

glory, but would turn tail with the first shot that whizzed about their ears; it was a call to action and to danger, impelled by love to Israel, and to Israel's God. Sirs, patriotism is one of the noblest sentiments that can occupy the human breast; but there is no patriotism so pure and disinterested as that which is kindled at the altar of love to God.

Never was there a more remarkable instance of it, than the dauntless British officer to whom I have already adverted. Self-negation characterised his whole career. After all his great work in China, General Gordon left the country as poor as he entered it, having refused all rewards. When a sum of £10,000 was forwarded to him by the Emperor, he divided it all amongst his troops. On his arrival in England, he declined every honour, preferring to bury himself in obscurity. The very medals that were showered upon him he put no value upon, and would even have them melted down to provide relief for those who were in want.

I am well aware, gentlemen, that probably none of you will ever have your patriotism tested, as was that of a Joab or a Gordon, on the field of battle. None the less will you have ample scope for its exercise. The greatest enemies of our country are not those who can be disposed of with powder and shot. There are far more terrible foes to be reckoned with than were ever met on the plain of Waterloo or the heights of Alma; and I herewith call out to active service against them every Christian patriot who is here. No enemy that ever threatened the honour of England is half as much to be dreaded as the combined forces of intemperance, unchastity, gambling, commercial immorality, infidelity, and superstition, that are attacking us on every side;

and there is not a right-hearted man among you that is not summoned to the front, and called to immediate action. Let the Joabs attack the Syrians, and let the Abishais attack the Ammonites; and let us all "be of good courage, and behave ourselves valiantly for our country, and for the cities of our God."

IV. Our fourth and last deduction from the text is a lesson of *genuine piety*. "And let the Lord do that which is good in His sight." I do not venture to say that Joab was a saint, nor would I like to answer for many things which he did: but on this occasion, certainly, his conduct and language were admirable, and worthy of imitation. "Abishai," he seems to say, "you and I shall do our best, and leave the issue with God. We cannot command success, but we can do our duty, and leave the result in higher hands than our own."

It is a fine thing to see a God-fearing soldier. It is an interesting feature of our time that there is in the British army a very considerable amount of deep and unaffected piety. Some of our highest officers, some of our most distinguished generals, both abroad and at home, are real men of God. They are none the less, but all the more, valuable as soldiers. They have more pluck and less fear than the others. A man is all the braver soldier for being a Christian. When true piety is engrafted on a fearless and gallant nature, it forms a splendid character. For a noble and beautiful Christianity, commend me to a converted soldier.

I never knew a man of a more resolute but simple faith in God, than the distinguished general of whom I have spoken more than once this evening. I think the secular press is at a loss what to make of him. Worldly-minded men can appreciate pluck, and hardihood, and self-denial, and intrepidity; but this lofty spiritual faith is a puzzle to them.

"General Gordon,' says one of the morning papers, "is not a man whose actions or whose fortunes can be estimated by the ordinary standard to which human affairs are submitted. His singularly pure and lofty character impresses every one with whom he is brought into contact. He believes himself to be always fulfilling a mission from a higher authority than any earthly government. A man of this heroic mould, who combines no small share of worldly wisdom with the integrity of a saint and the simplicity of a child, may walk securely in places where any other foot would slip. But, on the other hand, General Gordon would march quietly on to what he knew was certain destruction, if he believed that to do so was his duty."

I am well aware I am addressing, not a company of cadets, but of young merchants, and clerks, and artisans, and others who are not likely ever to smell gunpowder, or face the dangers of the battle-field; but none the less, in those spheres of life which you are to occupy, will you need the noble qualities indicated in my text; and above all, an unflinching courage united with firm faith in God. Temptations manifold are sure to assail you; temptations to yield to vice, and to forsake the faith for which your fathers contended even unto blood:

> "But be it yours to value and improve
> The blessings which your sires so dearly won;
> That sacred Truth which, joined with Christian love,
> May make even earth like Paradise begun;
> And those great rights, secured by martyrs' blood,
> Which once destroyed, our country's name is Ichabod!"

SLEEPING UNDER THE SERMON.

"And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk, down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead."—ACTS xx. 9.

VII.

SLEEPING UNDER THE SERMON.

AMONG the young men of the Bible, I must not forget the lazy youth who fell asleep under the preaching of St. Paul. That fatal nap on a Sunday evening at Troas has made the name of Eutychus immortal. Strange historians the inspired writers are! Here are six verses of the Bible occupied with the narrative of a drowsy lad who could not keep awake under the Apostle's long sermon, and fell from a three-storey window into the court below. I am very sure this paragraph is not here without a purpose; and my object this evening is to find out what that purpose is. If there are lessons for any of us, let us try to discover and apply them.

Some of you, probably, think with the sharp young Sunday scholar, who, when asked, "What is the first thing which this story teaches?" replied, "Why, that ministers should not preach long sermons!" This is a very excellent lesson, no doubt; and I trust that we gentlemen who occupy the pulpit will lay it to heart; though, at the same time, I can hardly regard it as the moral of the passage; at least, it is plain that Paul did not consider the accident to be a warning against long preaching, for, as soon as the young man was restored, he began again, and, as Luke tells us here in the 11th verse, "talked a long while, even till break of day." It is perfectly clear that Paul took upon himself none of the

responsibility of the mishap; and for that matter may have preached as long the next night at Assos. But Paul might do what other men dare not venture on; and if a tedious preacher should be foolish enough to quote his example, it may be sufficient to remind him that he is not a great Apostle. For your comfort of mind, I promise you that I shall finish my speech four hours before midnight; but, meanwhile, I shall do my best to keep you awake.

One thing strikes me as very noticeable in this passage, and it is this, that there is not a single word of rebuke offered on the Apostle's part to the young man after he was resuscitated; he does not in the least chide him, nor even say to him on parting, "Son, go and sleep no more during Divine worship." Nor does Luke, who narrates the story, moralise at all upon it; he does not make it the occasion of saying a single word to the drowsy heads who so quickly drop over when the truths of religion are addressed to them. Had he adopted the style of some modern teachers, how easy it would have been for him to "improve the occasion," and dwell on the awful "judgment" sent by God upon the young man whose spirit, indeed, was willing, but whose flesh was so weak. We do not need to turn to this passage if we wish to warn people against habits of somnolence in the House of God, or what is equally bad, a vacant condition of mind into which thousands lapse, when the words of the preacher are but a lullaby, awaking no earnest thoughts whatever. Such was the state of matters in the ancient time, when the Lord said to His prophet Ezekiel, "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Dean Swift has a famous discourse on the passage before us, in which he says that opium is not so stupefying to some persons as an

afternoon sermon: and adds, "that it is the very sound of the sermon which bindeth up their faculties is manifest from hence, because they all awake so very regularly as soon as it ceaseth, and with much devotion receive the blessing."

Now, my object this evening is to put before you the facts that are related here, and then to turn the story to some practical and useful end.

Troas was a seaport on the north-west coast of Asia Minor. It is now called Eski-Stamboul, and must always be an interesting spot to Christians as that from which St. Paul first sailed, when, in consequence of a Divine intimation, he proceeded to carry the Gospel from Asia to Europe. On the present occasion, the Apostle was making a return journey from Philippi to Ephesus. The Ægean Sea, as most of you know, divided the former of these towns from Troas; and though, on ordinary occasions, two days is ample time for a sailing ship to cross over, yet now, owing either to calms or contrary winds, five days were occupied with the voyage. The missionary party seems to have consisted of nine persons, including, besides Paul and Luke, Sosipater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus; but the latter seven I have mentioned preceded the other two, and waited for them to join them at Troas.

It was, so far as we can gather, on Tuesday, the 4th April, A.D. 58, that Paul and Luke set sail across the Ægean. They reached the port on Sunday, probably in the evening, for no record is given of the proceedings of that day. But on the first day of the following week we find them attending Divine service with the little company of Christian converts at Troas. It is very likely the congregation was more than ordinarily numerous, not only on

account of the arrival of the visitors I have named, but in the expectation of hearing the great Apostle preach. The place of meeting—there being no church yet erected—was a large room on the third storey of a house belonging to one who was favourable to the new religion. In all probability the number of worshippers fully taxed the capabilities of the place, so that it was scarcely possible for every one to get a seat; and a young man who was exceedingly desirous to hear Paul's address, forced his way to one of the windows, whose folding shutter had been thrown open for fresh air, and seated himself in the broad sill, in a position that appeared perfectly safe.

The scene is graphically pictured by Luke. There were many lamps burning in the room (for those folks had no fancy for what is called "a dim religious light"); and—what with the lamps and the crowd of people—I can well believe there was not much oxygen to spare. It was the middle of April, when the temperature in those parts is mild, so that it is easy to conceive that the atmosphere of the room would be close and oppressive. [I believe in light, and always feel some regret when these gas jets have to be lowered, for I like to look into the faces of my audience; but you will understand that when the lights are put down, it is not for the purpose of economy, but in order to keep the atmosphere in this building as cool and fresh as possible, for we do not wish to witness any such accident as happened at Troas.] I do not know at what hour Paul began his discourse, but, stirred by the crowd of eager faces before him—animated by zeal for his blessed Master—eager to gather souls into the Gospel net, and solemnised by the thought that he was to leave on the morrow, and might never meet his hearers again, he continued with impassioned earnestness to set before them the truths of salvation until midnight came; and probably

would have spoken even longer, had not an untoward incident occurred, which threw a panic over the assembly.

That young man seated on the window sill, who has probably had a good day's hard work, is evidently growing drowsy. I see his eyelids dropping; he begins to nod; then his head gradually sinks down upon his breast; his body leans over; he loses his balance; he falls; there is the sound of a heavy thud on the pavement below, and a scream of horror from the worshippers; and the great preacher's discourse is abruptly brought to a close. Paul lost no time in going down the staircase to see the unfortunate youth, but, owing probably to fracture of the skull, he was already beyond mere human skill; and the bystanders, as they lifted up his motionless form, said, "He is dead." Like Elisha on the Shunamite's son, the Apostle threw himself on the breathless body, saying to those around, "Do not distress yourselves, for his life is in him," and by a miraculous word restored him to perfect life and vigour. Then, as though nothing had occurred, he ascended to the upper room again, joined with the devout company in partaking of the Lord's Supper, and continued his words of exhortation until five o'clock of that April morning, when the first grey streaks of dawn lit up the eastern sky. The rest of the missionary party took ship at once for Assos, about twenty miles further south, but the indomitable Apostle, whom no labours seemed to exhaust (but who, I suspect, suffered not a little from sea sickness), preferred to go on foot; and so, though he had been labouring all that sleepless night, he trudged the long and difficult road, till he rejoined his friends, and so pushed on towards Ephesus and Jerusalem.

Now, having told the story, I come back to the question,

"With what object is it related here?" Well, perhaps the first object of the inspired historian is to add another to the evidences that Paul was a Divinely-sent Apostle—God sealing his ministry with miraculous gifts, and using him as an instrument to bring the dead to life again. This we shall take for granted; but there is many a subordinate point brought out in the passage; and a few of these lessons we shall bear away with us to-night.

I. We learn that, from the earliest times, the Christians recognized *the importance of social worship*. They were not satisfied with reading and praying in private. Profitable as they found their secret devotions to be, they felt it indispensable to their spiritual life to worship God in concert, to join in Christian fellowship with those who were like minded, and to have specific hours for so doing.

What was good for them is not less good for us. When a man says, "I don't see what is the use of connecting myself with a place of worship, or attending public services; I can be a Christian on my own account, and keep free of all these entanglements and responsibilities," you may be sure there is not much religion about him. The Apostles warn us "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together," and it is one of the first symptoms of religious backsliding and decline, when one becomes indifferent in regard to attendance on Divine ordinances. It is remarkable how quickly such neglect develops into a habit, and how that habit grows on one; until, with scarcely a qualm of conscience, the man gives up the public means of grace altogether. I have seen men drop back from a Christian profession into practical heathenism—and they are the saddest cases I meet with in my ministry—men who once seemed to value Gospel ordinances, but have now thrown off even the semblance of religion, and are no better than pagans or infidels; and it

all began with deserting the House of God. Be sure of it, my dear brothers, if your hearts are in the right place, you will not willingly be absent from the sanctuary, but will be ready with the Psalmist to say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thine house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth." I can truly say, the desire almost amounts to a passion with me, to make every one of these public services as interesting and attractive as possible. And fain would I have it, that no worshipper should ever leave this building without being able to say, "Lord, it was good to be there."

II. Our passage teaches that already *the first day of the week was set apart for religious worship*. We read here, "On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together." It was called the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath, and was held as such in commemoration of our Saviour's rising from the dead. There is no reason to think that the early Christians paid respect any longer to the Jewish Sabbath, but they began each week with a day of rest from worldly labour, and of holy convocation, and thus nourished the flame of living piety. I do not believe that, without such observance, Christianity can be long maintained, either in the nation or in the individual. Give up your Sunday, and you will soon give up your Bible. Many a man's downward career has commenced with desecration of the Lord's Day. Even apart from religion, you want one entire day in seven for rest. Nerves, brain, muscles, bones, the entire physical and mental nature, demand it. The world has found out that it can do less work in seven days than in six, and that the fifty-two days of the year given to rest are an addition rather than a subtraction. But this rest is not to be that of the idler or the sluggard. If you devote the sacred day to rolling on your bed, or lounging about doing nothing,

it will prove anything but a blessing. Learn from these primitive believers to turn the Lord's Day to your highest and eternal advantage.

III. We are taught here, also, *the duty and privilege of the Lord's Supper.* They met together to break the bread of holy communion. We have departed a long way from the practice of the early Christians in this matter. I do not refer to our less frequent celebration of the ordinance, for our circumstances are different from theirs, and we are left to our own judgment on this point; but I allude to the fact that, in those primitive times, all who took upon them the Christian name sat down together at the holy feast, whilst with us it is but a limited number in each congregation that do so. There was no such distinction amongst them, as we meet with everywhere here, of adherents and communicants; every adherent was a communicant; every one who espoused the cause of Jesus, and accepted Him as his Saviour, expressed that fact by partaking of the supper. We want to come back to primitive ideas about this sacrament. All who assembled in that upper room at Troas met to join in the ordinance, Eutychus amongst the rest; and there is no young man who has committed his soul to Christ for salvation who should keep back from this public profession of it. Many is the dear fellow who has assured me he has found it a great help to him, amid the snares of business and perils of city life, to be thus a pronounced believer; and he has again and again come away from the Lord's table strengthened and emboldened for the battle before him.

IV. I learn, moreover, that *that is a true House of God, where His people sincerely meet together to worship Him.* Not a syllable about any ceremony of consecration. Neither here nor elsewhere in the New Testament will you find even a hint of this. That large room on the third floor

at Troas was as truly a church, a sanctuary, as the stateliest Gothic edifice which Anglican or Roman bishop ever blest. Never forget this; you cannot allure the Spirit of God by imposing architecture, or elaborate music, or splendid art, or gorgeous ceremonial; where His humble and believing people are, there will He dwell.

V. I gather, too, from our passage, that *preaching is an important part of Divine worship*. Some people in our day are ever ready to decry this ordinance, forgetting what St. Paul says, that "it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." They go in for silent meetings, or spiritual conferences, or something of that sort; whilst in many a church the form of prayer or liturgy is accounted everything, and a ten minutes' essay takes the place of instructive exposition or impassioned appeal. We shall do well to stick to apostolic lines; and it has been the special glory of our Church that it has exalted the pulpit, and demanded of its ministers a manly and painstaking enforcement of the great doctrines of the Christian faith.

We have no record of Paul's text or line of thought that night; but it is not hard to guess what he discoursed about. He never went far from the central theme—Christ crucified; and well did he know how to interest and arrest his hearers. They would not have sat on till midnight had they not been spellbound. Such was the burning eloquence of the preacher, the hours flew by unobserved; the audience was carried away by his overpowering earnestness. Preacher and hearers act and react upon one another; and breathless attention in the pew stimulates to effective oratory in the pulpit. Old Dr. Barnes had been listening to a tedious preacher, and being twitted by a friend upon having nodded once or twice,

insisted that he had been awake all the time. "Well then," said his friend, "tell me what the sermon was about." "It was about—half an hour too long," was the dry rejoinder. Hogarth has been called the most audible of painters, just as Dante is styled the most visible of poets; and the painting that suggested this title for the famous artist is one of a sleeping congregation, in which you can almost think you hear the labouring tones of the weary and monotonous preacher. It is remarkable, as I have already said, that in this whole passage before us, there is not a hint of reproach, either on the preacher for being too long, or on one of the hearers for dropping over; and as to the latter, I take it, the exception proved the rule; there was but one sleeper in the crowded assembly, and all the rest remained interested to the close. You may name to me the greatest pulpit orators the Church has produced since the days of Paul, I know not one who, prolonging his sermon until midnight, would find but a single sleeper in his audience. Nor was this preaching mere rhetorical declamation; Paul was a solid thinker and an earnest student; and though but a passing visitor at Troas, had his little library with him. When writing subsequently to Timothy, he says, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments."

And this suggests my closing thought this evening. There are indications that Paul hurried away from Troas early on that Monday morning, perhaps under a hint that he would be arrested if he remained. He had been staying at the house of a Christian convert, Carpus; and as he was not to adopt the usual method of travelling by ship, but "was minded to go to Assos a-foot," his heavy cloak and his books would be a burden to him; so he left them to be brought on at a convenient opportunity.

But what is the meaning of "the books and the parchments"? Paper having not yet been invented, there were two kinds of material much used for writings, the papyrus, or paper-reed, and a kind of vellum. The latter, of course, was more costly and more permanent, and was mainly used in the transcription of the ancient Scriptures. The former, a kind of leaf, was specially prepared for writing; and when a number of these leaves were attached together formed a book. Perhaps the books referred to were the literature Paul had acquired when a student under Gamaliel at Jerusalem; but "the parchments" were the precious rolls of Isaiah and the Psalms and the other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures: so that Paul's request to Timothy amounted to this, "Bring my books with you, but specially my Bible."

"*Specially my Bible.*" Why, here is text enough for a pointed sermon; here is something for you all to think about; no book so valuable as this, the Word of God. Whatever literature you read, whatever authors you admire, give this volume the prominent place on your table, and the largest share of your time. The name Eutychus means "fortunate"; and many an one, I daresay, has envied this young man the privilege of listening to the great Apostle; but, far more fortunate is each of you in possessing this gloriously-complete Bible; in which

> "Both law and Gospel, bound in one,
> Do meet the sinner's anxious eye;
> And point him, when his hopes are gone,
> From Sinai's Mount to Calvary."

It is the grand mission of the Church to bring you to the Bible; of the Bible to bring you to the Gospel; of the Gospel to bring you to Christ; and of Christ to bring you to life everlasting. Amen.

DESTROYED BY PROSPERITY.

"He was marvellously helped till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction."

2 CHRON. xxvi. 15.

VIII.

DESTROYED BY PROSPERITY.

NOW, young men, I have a fine subject for you this evening; my only fear is I may not do justice to it.

To some of you, I daresay, Uzziah is not a familiar name. There are many Old Testament names with which you are much better acquainted. Do I mention Joseph, or Moses, or Gideon, or Joshua, or David, or Daniel, at once the character in its main features stands before you, you remember the chief incidents of the life, and you have a notion of the moral I am to draw.

Not so, probably, with Uzziah. And yet, let me tell you, he was one of the greatest of the kings of Judah, and reigned longer than any other monarch; and whether you look to the variety of his accomplishments, or the extent of his territory, or the beneficence of his rule, he is only second to the far-famed Solomon.

Now, I am, first of all, to give you a sketch, and then to draw the lessons which it yields. The subject of the sketch is King Uzziah; and, as the text suggests, I will give it in two parts, which I may entitle, (1) his "Marvellous Prosperity," and (2) his "Marvellous Presumption." We find this young man, favoured by fortune, rising step by step till he reaches the pinnacle of success; and then, in one fatal hour, giddy with his elevation, toppling over,

falling right down into ignominy and ruin, and illustrating the proverb of his wise progenitor, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

I. *Uzziah's Prosperous Career.*—"He was marvellously helped till he was strong." His good fortune, as the world would call it, dated from his seventeenth year. Although his father, Amaziah, had been hurled from the throne, and swept out of the world by the rage of the people, who could not tolerate his defiant idolatry and wickedness, yet, apparently, there was no ill-will towards the dynasty, or the young prince was decidedly popular, for no obstacle whatever was put in the way of his accession. We read in the first verse that "All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father."

It was a trying position for a mere boy to be placed in; for the cares and responsibilities, as well as the temptations and luxuries, of a royal palace demand a ripe wisdom and strength of moral purpose rarely found at so early an age. But God's grace could qualify even so young a man for the task; and I am struck with the fact, that almost every one of the good kings of Judah was quite a youth when he succeeded to the throne. There is no reason why the season of young manhood should be given up to passion and frivolity; and nowhere is the mantle of a grave and thoughtful piety more comely than when it is thrown over the shoulders of one who is but a stripling. At such a period of life the heart controls quite as much as the head; there is a tenderness of feeling which, as years advance, survives, indeed, in the woman, but commonly dies into coldness in the man. As mature age is not all strength, so youth is not all weakness. "Old men," as Elihu truly said, "are not always wise"; and young men

are not always foolish. Alike in statesmanship, and art, and science, many of the greatest achievements have been wrought by men long before their prime; and what Mr. Ruskin says of art, is a truth of much wider application: "The most beautiful works have all been done in youth."

It was a great advantage to the young Uzziah, that he had the loyal attachment and confidence of his people. But what mainly guarded him from the dangers around him, and kept him steady on his throne, was a sincere piety. He was blessed with a wise and faithful friend and minister in the person of Zechariah, who was a deeply spiritually-minded man, and exercised a powerful and wholesome influence on the youthful monarch. For, so we read in the fifth verse, "And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." All that is pleasing in a young man's character becomes doubly attractive when brought under the influence of a genuine religion. And those very elements which, under the malign control of Satan, may lead him headlong into ruin, become, when swayed by the Divine Spirit, fruitful of happiness and blessing.

For a time, everything to which Uzziah put his hand turned out to be a success. He was a man of considerable energy and versatility, and had no idea of luxuriating in the soft indulgences of the palace, whilst there was work to be done for the advantage of his kingdom; and on every project he undertook fortune seemed to smile. The first thing to which he turned his attention showed his active enterprise.

On the Arabian Gulf there was a small seaport called Eloth, which had been an important commercial station in the days of Solomon, but had since then been

seized by the Edomites, and allowed to fall into ruin. Uzziah recovered this town to Judah, rebuilt and fortified it, and established it as a mart for foreign trade. The next thing to which he set himself was to weaken the Philistines—those ancient enemies of his country—which he did by levelling several of their fortresses to the ground, and constructing fortified outposts on the borders of their territory. Then he caused the Arabians to feel his might, and the Mehunims, and compelled the Ammonites to pay tribute to him. So that there was no want of pluck about him. It is the greatest mistake in the world to suppose that godliness is unfavourable to a robust manliness and energy of character—that a pious young man must, as a matter of course, be a sheep, or a "ninny," or a fool. It is religion that supplies not only the loftiest motives, but the mightiest and steadiest impulse; and whether a man be a king, a warrior, a clerk, or a ploughman, whatever work he takes in hand will be more effectively done, if he is under the control of an earnest piety.

But Uzziah did not confine his energies to operations abroad. He repaired the walls of Jerusalem, and fixed upon them formidable engines of war, making the capital strong against hostile assault.

Nor was his taste entirely military in its character. I think more of him as I read of his efforts to promote agriculture, for there is not one of the ancient kings of whom this is so expressly recorded. See what the tenth verse states: "He built towers in the desert"—that was for the protection of travelling merchants, and of the peasantry—"and digged many wells; for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains; husbandmen also, and vinedressers in the mountains, and in Carmel; for he loved husbandry."

So that, altogether, he was a clever, enterprising, busy, practical man; just the sort of man to advance the arts of civilisation, to develop a country's resources, and further its prosperity. And, indeed, this is what he did; for under his reign the kingdom of Judah reached a more prosperous condition than it had known since the time of Solomon; and, as the fifteenth verse informs us, the reputation of Uzziah spread far abroad to foreign lands.

Up to this point he had had an even run of success. I have said that fortune smiled on him at every turn; but did I mean what men commonly call "good luck," this chapter would give me many a rebuke, for again and again we are reminded where the secret of his prosperity lay. It was God who "made him to prosper" we are told in verse 5; again in verse 7, "God helped him against the Philistines"; and once more in our text, "He was marvellously helped till he was strong."

My brothers, never forget the quarter from whence all true prosperity must come. Success does not depend on yourselves alone. Still less does it come from chance. Take God with you into all the affairs of life. Look to Him to bless your business. Ask His help in every fresh enterprise you undertake. There is not a Christian man among you who does not daily pray—pray for spiritual blessings; but I want you to take everything to God, remembering that even "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." Thus far Uzziah is to be admired and envied; but the latter part of our text throws a dark shadow on the picture; for we have here—

II. *His Marvellous Presumption.*—"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." It requires special grace to keep a man right when he has had a career of unbroken prosperity. Sometimes, as I am about to come to the pulpit, a paper is put into my hand,

to the effect that the prayers of the congregation are requested for such and such a person in deep affliction; but there are others who are not less in need of being remembered at God's throne. One day, when the celebrated George Whitfield was about to commence the service, an intimation was read out from the desk below: "The prayers of the congregation are desired for a young man who has become heir to an immense fortune, and who feels he has much need of grace to keep him humble in the midst of his riches." Nothing tries a man so much as the favour of fortune and the flattery of the world. The godly Richard Cecil, having learnt, regarding a young man of his acquaintanceship, that he had lately been very successful in business, and had been amassing a considerable amount of money, called upon him, and, on entering, remarked, "I understand, sir, you are in a very dangerous state." "I am not aware of it," replied the youth, astonished to be thus addressed. "Probably you are not," rejoined Mr. Cecil, "and, therefore, I have called upon you. I hear you are getting rich; take care, for it is the road by which the devil leads hundreds to destruction."

I do not know whether Uzziah's good and faithful minister Zechariah was now dead; but if not, I cannot doubt that he often warned the king of the snare into which he was liable to fall; unhappily, however, such warning, if given, was unheeded. Trampling on one of the strictest enactments of the Jewish law, which limited the priestly offices to consecrated persons of the tribe of Levi, Uzziah dared to enter into the most holy place of the temple, and to burn incense on the sacred altar. Not satisfied with being king, he must be high priest too. Perhaps he was tempted to imitate the heathen sovereigns around him, who generally were supreme in matters religious as well as civil; anyhow, nothing would content the elated monarch short of fulfilling

the highest function of the priestly office. Horror-struck with his profanity, Azariah, the real priest, with a band of faithful coadjutors, entreated him to go out of the sanctuary. But Uzziah was not to be talked to thus; he persevered in his impious attempt; when, suddenly, an awful judgment from Heaven arrested him; he was smitten with a loathsome leprosy; and, in terror and dismay, rushed forth from the courts he had desecrated.

Of that terrible affliction he never recovered. Compelled, of course, to live in a separate house, he was cut off from society, and shut out from any enjoyment of the wealth he had gathered; and thus he ended his day a wretched outcast from his fellow-men, and even denied a place of burial in the sepulchres of the kings.

If such a history is not full of solemn warning, I know not what biography can be. Ah! thousands and thousands of times, on a lower scale, has the story of Uzziah's career been repeated. Nay, I have myself seen it repeated—only too true to the original—in the case of young men who have been associated with us here; once modest, unassuming, religious men; but lifted up with prosperity, tempted to cast their principles behind them, and carried forward to a pinnacle of presumption, from which they toppled over into a dark abyss of unbelief and ruin. Permit me, then, to offer—

III. *The Note of Warning.*—As there are many kinds of prosperity, so there are many kinds of presumption, and I am sure you will not take it amiss, if I caution you against one or two of them. A man may be "lifted up to his destruction," for example: (1) *By the pride of money.* It does not take a large fortune to make some people "purse-proud"—and very disagreeable people these are. They have risen from nothing; they are the makers of their own

fortunes; and so they toss their heads, and put on airs, as though it was the greatest condescension to take notice of those who were once their playmates. I have known of young men who have come up from the country to London with not more than a couple of half-crowns in the world, and they got into a good niche, and advanced from step to step, until in a few years they were rich men; but I observed they took good care not to tell us anything about their father's two-roomed cottage, or their mother's spinning-wheel; they were far too fine now to go the Dissenting chapel they once attended; and as for their accent, it had become such a quere mixture, no man on earth could say where they came from.

Now that is very small, very contemptible; but, after all, it is just poor human nature, and we are all liable to it in some form or other. They say in America, that in Boston, where they worship literature, the question is, "How much does he know?" In Philadelphia, where they worship rank, it is, "Who was his father?" And in New York, where they worship the dollar, it is, "How much is he worth?" But if you estimate a man by his money, or by his birth, or even by his learning, it does not say much for your own judgment. "The man's the gowd for a' that."

Although Solomon declares that "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them," we are not to imagine that a prosperous career necessarily leads to moral or spiritual ruin, for "God is able to make you stand"; and, happily, we can point to instances in which, with money pouring like a flood into a man's lap, he has remained as humble and unostentatious as before, and has used his wealth to noble purpose.

Gentlemen, may God bless you in your business, and open up to you lucrative and comfortable spheres. But

rather may you be pinched and poor all your days, than that, like Uzziah, your heart should be lifted up by prosperity to your own destruction.

(2) *The pride of intellect* I wish to put you on your guard against a current which is running very strong in our day. I mean the tendency to set up the reason against religion. Many of you are acquainted with young men—clever fellows perhaps they are—who have given up Christianity altogether, alleging that their cultured understanding compels them to reject it. We have had such men here, once members of the Church, and teachers in our Sunday School, but now, through pride of intellect, "lifted up to their destruction." They fancied themselves able to grapple with problems far beyond their reach. They thought they ought to understand everything, and so, because they could not, they would believe nothing. Oh, this is a terrible curse to a man! It brings darkness and misery unutterable. Doubt and unbelief, once sprung, are well nigh ineradicable. The most wretched men I know are the men who have cast off their faith. Remember, their position is a very weak one, and easily assailed. There is much more for revelation than against it. Truth shines by its own light; and even the internal evidence which the Bible affords to the ingenuous mind that studies it, is alone sufficient to silence the caviller. Do not apologise to the doubter; it is his place to apologise to you. The man who seeks to rob you of your faith does you an infinitely greater wrong than he who tries to rob you of your purse or property. It is pitiful to see a Christian professor wincing before a blatant, loud-voiced scoffer, as though with a craven fear that the would-be philosopher is right, and the believer without firm ground to stand on.

My brethren, you were never more mistaken. The

best intellect of our time is in favour of Christian truth. Some years ago, indeed, science seemed to threaten our religion. She does so no more. I am speaking carefully, when I say that the direction of scientific inquiry is towards the faith of the Christian Church, and not against it. The reaction that has set in is unquestionable. The difficulties that face the infidel are enormously greater than those that face the intelligent Christian. To every one of you who has but an atom of faith, I would say, with the Apostle, "Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward."

Taking even the lowest ground, see whether infidelity or Christian faith brings most human happiness. Contrast the labours, say of Voltaire or Paine, with those of John Wesley. Can it be said with truth of either of the two former that he has made any man happier or better? Yet who will deny that, through the instrumentality of the latter, thousands and tens of thousands have had a brightened life and a peaceful death? Oh, by all means use the brains that God has given you; think and study all you can; let your intellectual powers have full sway; but let a humble piety hold the guiding rein, lest, lifted up with pride, you fall through the error of the wicked.

Perhaps I might mention (3) *Pride of wit.* Now I go in for a sunny, cheerful religion. God has put within us a faculty of mirthfulness, which He did not mean us to suppress. There is no necessary connection between dulness and piety, between a long face and a new heart. They are no friends of religion who seem to teach that it is a sin to laugh. True, but there are some men who are hardly ever serious. They must turn everything into a jest. No matter how solemn the theme, they will have their joke and their fun. Now, when wit and humour are kept in their proper place, they are salutary—they lighten labour,

and help to make the wheels of life run smoothly. But it is possible to indulge this faculty in such a way as to bring much detriment to the soul. There are subjects which should always be handled in a grave and reverent spirit. Puns and quibbles are entirely out of place when religion is the theme. Never, under any circumstances, use the language of Scripture in jest. I have known men, smart young fellows, with whom this became a terrible snare. The wit, no doubt, is a general favourite. He moves like a comet, and in the darkest quarters throws out his sparkling scintillations. But, like a comet, he is not a safe companion, and, ten to one, having made awkward hits, will suddenly dart off into dark vacuity. Be it yours, rather, to resemble the quiet star, that shines with calm and steady light, nor ever becomes eclipsed till it melts away into the light of morn.

Dear friends, I must not keep you longer. I trust Uzziah has taught us all a wholesome lesson. We are all apt to grow vain. We are all very easily uplifted. If it is not money, or talent, or success, or learning, which lifts us up, it will be something else. Satan is sure to find our weak point, and tempt us there.

Where, then, is our place of security? I pause not a moment to answer—at the foot of the cross. A look of the crucified Saviour is enough to empty the vainest man of his pride. That sight shows sin enough in us to sink us to the lowest hell. But, oh! it tells of mercy too. Amid the mountains of our sin there rolls the grand song of redemption, pardon for all sin, cleansing for all pollution, light for all darkness, healing for all disease. Oh! believe me, my brothers, through all these two thousand years the Gospel has never proved a failure. Not one sinner has humbly looked to the Lord Jesus without receiving a full salvation. I ask

you, then, to give your hand to-night to the best Friend you ever met; I bid you accept from God the best blessing that Heaven can bestow; I point you to the secret of inexhaustible happiness; I implore you to make a resolve that shall determine your whole future career. The Koran of Mohammed has a strange fable about the patriarch Abraham. It says that, when he set out upon his travels, he had no knowledge of religious truth. He looked up, and saw the evening star, and said to his followers, "That is my god." But the star went down; and he said, "I care not for any gods that set." By-and-by, the grand constellations appeared, and he said, "These are my gods." But the galaxies of stars were carried beneath the west; and again he said, "I will have no gods that set." Then the moon arose, and he exclaimed, "That is my god." But the moon, too, went down. Then, when the sun uprose, he saluted it as Divine; but the wheeling sky carried the king of day away behind the pine-tops of the west. Then Abraham, in the holy twilight, turning his face upward toward the serene and tranquil empyrean, exclaimed, "I give myself to Him who was, and is, and is to come, Father of the sun and moon and stars, who never sets, for He only is the everlasting Light." To Him I commend you all, now and evermore! Amen.

PROFESSION WITHOUT PRACTICE, AND PRACTICE WITHOUT PROFESSION.

" What think ye? A certain man had two sons: and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. . . . He answered and said, I will not: but afterwards repented, and went. . . . And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?"

MATT. xxi. 28-31.

IX.

PROFESSION WITHOUT PRACTICE, AND PRACTICE WITHOUT PROFESSION.

CHRIST tells two distinct stories that begin in this way: "A certain man had two sons"; but though in each case a contrast is drawn between the young men, the character and purport of the stories widely differ. The one story is commonly known as "the parable of the Prodigal Son," because the interest of it culminates and centres in a foolish youth, who had gone galloping down to ruin, but, through mercy, was brought back to penitence and pardon; whilst the other story (which we have before us this evening) is generally styled "the Parable of the Two Sons," because here the interest is equally divided, each of the young men serving to furnish a needed warning.

If you will kindly give me your thoughts for half an hour, I wish to speak about these two lads, who are just types of two classes that exist in the world still, one of whom promise less than they perform, and the other of whom perform less than they promise.

For it is astonishing how human nature, in its main features, remains the same from age to age—how the same infirmities show themselves at every period of its history. Geologists tell us that in the lower strata of certain rocks they find fossils of many plants and animals

that can nowhere be found in the flora or fauna of the earth now. Their day is over; they are extinct. But every variety of human character pourtrayed in the Bible still exists. The sketches Christ drew to the life are as true as ever. And it is this that makes His teaching so searching and forcible. These two sons have their exact representatives here to-night; and if I can but bring out their features as I wish to do, I believe that some of you will see your own picture, and I trust will be the better for the hints and warnings to be given.

The father of these young men is a respectable man, belonging to what we would call the middle, or lower middle class of society. He owns or rents a piece of land, which, with the assistance of his family, he is able to manage and cultivate. He is not a large proprietor, like the gentleman described in the preceding chapter, who required to hire group after group of day labourers, and kept a steward or overseer to look after them, and manage the estate. Neither, on the other hand, is he a mere labouring man, holding no land of his own. Like many of the small farmers in England, or "crofters" as they call them in Scotland, he has a portion of ground sufficient to provide for the wants of his household, and not too large to be efficiently worked by his sons and himself. I think he represents a condition of life in which a large amount of real happiness is found. I do not know that I have anywhere witnessed more pleasant scenes of domestic bliss and cheerful industry than amongst the class referred to. To a great extent they are the strength of the State, and the guardians of piety and virtue in the land. It is neither amongst the very wealthy, nor the very poor, that true religion seems to find its most congenial home. Like Agur, it says, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Ill fares the land in which this class is diminished or by

unjust laws crushed out. Woe betide the country whose population tends to divide itself into the two extremes of large proprietors and landless labourers. It is a calamity which wise statesmanship will ever seek to avert—this ownership of the soil by a few magnates, who owe it to an accident of birth, whilst the vast bulk of the people neither have, nor can acquire, a square yard which they can call their own. Give me a country apportioned amongst the largest number of its inhabitants, and dotted over with thriving homesteads, where father and sons themselves till the soil, and I shall have the highest hope of that country's weal. I shall be pardoned for saying that it is from such homes that a large proportion of you have come, and that I cannot but connect with this circumstance the fact, that so many whom it has been my pleasure to form acquaintanceship with here, have turned out well in life, a credit to themselves, a comfort to their friends, and a blessing to society.

But a shadow now falls upon the picture. The same spirit of pride and rebellion that entered paradise, and broke up the first earthly home, has intruded here. Observing probably the evidences of negligence in his vineyard, the father goes to one of his sons and bids him address himself to the work, whereupon the young man gives him a flat refusal. He is not even courteous or civil. In the rudest, bluntest manner he says, "I will not." He does not even beg to be excused, or ask for delay, or offer to provide a substitute; but curtly refuses to obey. "If father wants the vineyard looked after, he can do it himself, or get somebody else to do it. I am not going to toil like a slave at that sort of work." It is easy to see that the poison of conceit and idleness has got into that young man. He does not want to work. He cannot soil his fingers with labour in the field. His white hands are

not made to tie up the vines or turn over the soil. He has no liking for manual employment. He would take things easy, and enjoy himself.

Now when a man begins life in that style, it is a very dark future that he has before him. Disobedience to parents, and disinclination to work, are about as bad omens as can possibly exist. The youth that does not honour his father and mother, has got at least one great blemish in his character. We can augur no good of him. It is as certain as anything can be in this world, that the lad who speaks disrespectfully to his father, and shows no disposition to relieve him of his toil and care, will turn out badly in life. So, on the other hand, the tenderly affectionate manner in which I hear some young men speak of their parents, and their passionate desire to ease their burden, and minister to their comfort, not only evince a beautiful character, but give promise of a happy and prosperous career.

But stay, I am doing this young man injustice. It was but a spurt of bad temper or laziness; for "afterwards," adds Jesus, "he repented and went." He saw the mistake he had made, and was ashamed of himself. Better thoughts prevailed, and throwing off his coat, he buckled to the work, and made up by his energy for the hours he had lost.

Seeing him in the heat of the day wiping the sweat from his brow, his father forgave him the misconduct of the morning, and rejoiced to see the evidence of a true repentance.

Meanwhile, however, he had gone to the second son, and bid him work in the vineyard. This youth is a model of prompt obedience, the pink of politeness. "I go, sir." Listen how respectful is his tone. I admire him for that. Some young men appear to think it manly to be disre-

spectful to their father. I hear them speak of him as the "governor," or "the old gentleman," or in some such unbecoming terms. Never be tempted to do that. You smile at this as a trifle, but I tell you I am struck with the importance which the Bible attaches to this matter. Indeed, it enjoins universal courtesy, it bids us "honour all men." It inculcates genuine politeness. The true Christian is always the true gentleman, no matter what be his income or his social rank. But especially the Bible enjoins you to honour your father and mother, and pronounces terrible woes upon those who neglect this precept. We think well, then, of this young man, on account of his prompt and respectful reply.

Stop a moment, though, for we are giving him a credit he does not deserve. The fair answer was all the response he made to his father's commands. Words without works. Profession without practice. The man told a deliberate lie. He promised, but had no intention to perform. He said, "Father, I am off at once, to do a day's good work in the vineyard;" but the words were scarcely out of his lips when he hied away to join his frivolous companions, or gave himself up to drowsy indolence.

The question then comes, Which was the worse of these two young men? Christ puts it in another form—Which was the better? "Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" The answer is not difficult to give. We all join with His hearers in saying, "The first." Profession and practice are both right and good, but better practice without profession than profession without practice.

Now Christ uses these two brothers as an illustration of two classes of persons, each of whom makes a serious mistake, and though the one is greatly worse than the other, yet both require to be plainly spoken to. Were

every genuine and decided Christian in this building, every converted and saved man, instantly to take his departure, we should have a company left that might be divided into two groups, of whom these two brothers in this parable might be representative. I want to have a solemn word with each to-night.

Well, I take class number one. I address you, who to every appeal to become Christians, answer, "I will not." You are not religious men. You do not know anything about saving faith, about the new heart, about being born again, about union with Christ, about having the Spirit of God dwelling in you. All that is Greek to you. You know nothing about it. But then, you do not profess to do. You make no pretensions to be pious. With all your heart you detest hypocrisy, and cant, and everything of that sort; and, to tell the truth, you hold your heads very high, as being at least what some religious men cannot claim to be—thoroughly honest, straightforward men. There is no cloak of sanctity about you. You are not real Christians, but you frankly say so.

Now, my dear fellow, there is not a more subtle temptation in the world than that into which you are like to fall. I do not know any wile of the devil that is more successful with young men. Thousands in this city are slain by it. Satan tempts you to believe that the frank avowal that you are not good will serve as a substitute for goodness. You think that the absence of hypocritical pretension to holiness will do instead of holiness. Your manly nature has such a horror of a sanctimonious profession, that you rebound to the opposite extreme, an honest disavowal of being religious at all. You say, "You know I do not profess, as So-and-So does;" and so you imagine you are relieved of responsibility, and

that the frankness of your disclaimer may be counted as a merit. Positively, I have heard young men speaking as though their entire rejection of all religious profession were itself their religion, and would be their passport into heaven. I have known men give themselves to drink, and bad company, and late hours, and free-thinking, and everything that is vile: and then, so to speak, stand shoulder to shoulder with some pure and godly man, and, stretching out the neck, claim to be as good and high as he, because, forsooth, they made no pretension to be religious. It is a gross delusion. Your boasted honesty will do nothing to save you. No doubt hypocrisy is loathsome; but the hatefulness of hypocrisy will not make your impiety good. I wish you would think of this, and more than think of it, come at once to a true and saving repentance. There is many a hearer who has in this very building said at the close of a solemn appeal, "Well, I must think of these matters, as I have not done;" but there has been no result, because there was not instant decision. In the army, if a general says to a soldier of his regiment, "Come," it is counted disobedience for the man to reply to the command, "Sir, I'll think over it." Yet, is not this just the way in which some of you treat God's command? The Bible says, "Now commandeth He all men everywhere to repent." How are you dealing with that command? You imagine you do very well if you say, "I must really think over it;" but are you aware that God reckons that to be disobedience? You are forthwith to repent. And if you will but do so, the parable has great encouragement for you. That first son repented and obeyed, and the past was all forgiven. The father might have refused him when he came, and said, "No; you would not come to work in the vineyard when I called you; you shall not be received now." But had he done so, he would not have been a

true picture of our Father in heaven. Do not let the memory of past misconduct tempt you to think you will not be accepted now. Oh! some of you must often have said to that ill-treated father, when he pleaded with you to come, "I will not." You have been called, and invited, and implored, and warned, till Sinai has no more threatenings to thunder in your ear, and Calvary has no more tenderness to melt your heart. Yet, oh! let it be told of some of you to-night, as of that vine-dresser's son, "They said, I will not; but afterwards they repented and went." If you will but give up your heart at once to the Saviour who died for you, whose atoning blood can wipe out the sins of a lifetime, and whose arms, which may be closed against you before another Sabbath, are to-night stretched wide open to welcome you, I promise you a religion that will soothe your sorrows, and help you over all your troubles in this world, and at death usher you into the palaces of everlasting life. Oh, you do not know what is before you, and how you will need all the help that the Gospel of Jesus can give. Some of you will have many a hard rub in life, in this or in foreign lands; you will meet with difficulties, and disappointments, and rebuffs you little expect. You are not going to pass out of the world without your share of trials and tears, and sitting by sick-beds, and dropping loved ones into the grave, and so forth; and with twenty-five years' experience behind me, I solemnly say that there is only one thing that can support a man amid all these changes and sorrows, and carry him triumphantly through, and that is a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What am I to say about the other class represented in our text, that give the promise, but never perform? They are the class for whom, all through Scripture, God reserves His heaviest and bitterest condemnation. They say, and

do not. "Thou art near in their mouth, but far from their reins." The structure of the parable shows that the second son was nothing less than a bare-faced hypocrite. Even at the moment when he said, "I go, sir," he had no such intention. His smooth words were a lie, for Christ does not represent him as afterwards changing his mind when his father was out of sight, but rather concealing it when he was present. Of his brother it was said, when he had made a bad resolution, "He afterwards repented." No such thing is said of this one. He did not change his mind at all. Whilst actually promising to obey, he had not the smallest intention of doing so. The first youth changed from bad to good; the second did not change from good to bad, for he was bad all through; there was no change at all. He is the true picture, therefore, not (as some persons imagine) of those who have given sincere and earnest promises, and have made good and pious endeavours, and then subsequently have been entrapped into sin; but of those who, without any grace in their heart at all, have made a fair external show, and by their smooth tongue have imposed upon society. It is not the backslider but the hypocrite that is here held up to view. For the unhappy backslider there is many a kind and tender word in the Bible, for the hypocrite none.

I am here then to warn every one against trusting to the tinsel of mere profession. Some of us have had such a godly upbringing, and are outwardly so like Christians, that we are tempted to think this will do. Father, a man of God; mother, a jewel of a saint; our early home fragrant with pious memories; it seems almost a necessity that we must be of the right sort. That doesn't follow at all. It is not a mere whitewashing that God requires, but "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The maniac who twists some straw

around his head, and thinks it a crown; who grasps in his hand a stick, and thinks it a sceptre; who picks up some stones, and thinks them diamonds, is no more the victim of delusion, than is every one who thinks himself right with God and safe for heaven, without having accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. I should not be standing in this pulpit to-night if I had any other faith than this, that the man who, conscious of his sins, flings himself at the feet of the Redeemer, and yields his whole self to Him, shall not only have immediate pardon, but the certainty of everlasting life.

Young men, will this Gospel, which has sufficed for your fathers, throwing brightness over their life, cheering them in death, and floating them away into eternal bliss, I ask, will it not do for you? Are you prepared to exchange it for any of the cold philosophies of this restless, boastful age, philosophies that mutually contradict each other, and snatching out of our hand the lamp of revelation, leave us in a worse than Egyptian darkness? I have seen young men on their bed of death; but never one who found away from Christ the rest his soul desired. It is a fact which has a profound influence on my own mind, that I have seen enough of Christ's power, both in the life and in the death of believers, to satisfy me, had I no other evidence, that the grace of God is a magnificent and triumphant reality. How many of you are prepared, then, to come and prove this for yourselves? God help you to an immediate decision.

I have just another word, and I cannot close without it. Preachers commonly close with an appeal to the unsaved, but my last word to-night is to you who are Christians. Christ wants you all; and I summon you in His name, to come and "work in His vineyard." The Church cannot afford to have one idle man in it. The

Church cannot afford to have any of her young men idle. God be thanked for every man of metal in this congregation—for every brave and valiant soldier of the cross. I tell you what it is, young men: the Church of Christ wants more back-bone in our day—more decision, and courage, and heroism. When all the forces of darkness seem to be in full blast; when steam printing presses are yearly printing acres of infidel literature; when in thousands of homes books are read which treat Christianity as though it were an exploded fable; when men are labouring with might and main in the national Church to bring this country back to the superstitions of Rome; when the pressure of mercantile business, and the eager pursuit of wealth are banishing from many minds all thought of God and of eternity; when the night air of our cities is polluted with the unclean laughter breaking up from ten thousand saloons of dissipation and abandonment: O! I ask you, is it the time for one of you, who has a spark of true Christian manliness in you, to stand idle in the vineyard? Come, and let us band and bind ourselves together; resolved to do some little good whilst we have the opportunity; and, at east, to leave the world better than we found it.

"That man may last, but never lives,
Who much receives, but nothing gives;
Whom few can love, whom none can thank,
The Church's blot, the nation's blank.

"But he who marks from day to day,
In Christian toil his arduous way,
Treads the same path his Saviour trod,
The path to glory and to God."

EARLY CUT OFF, BUT LONG REMEMBERED.

"*In him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel.*"
1 KINGS xiv. 13.

X.

EARLY CUT OFF, BUT LONG REMEMBERED.

THAT the grace of God may convert a man in the prime of life, ay, and bring even a grey-headed sinner to the foot of the cross, is a truth of which, happily, examples can easily be found. Not a few over whom forty, fifty, or even sixty years have passed, have been called into the kingdom of Christ; and some at the very verge of eternity, after a long life of unbelief and vice, have been snatched out of the grasp of Satan, and caught up to the glories of Paradise. "Go and speak to the young," said an aged man, to one who was pressing on him the invitations of the gospel; "it is too late for me to hear these things now; my day of grace is past." Nay, say not so, my venerable friend, for Christ is omnipotent to save; there is nothing too hard for the Lord; even your icy heart may be melted, and your dark soul enlightened:

> "For while the lamp holds on to burn,
> The greatest sinner may return."

But, while this is true, let it never be forgotten that the great majority of conversions take place in early life. If the old proverb is true, "Repentance is never too late," still more true is it to say, "Repentance is never too soon."

We have before us to-night an instance of early piety that is worth looking into. There are two royal persons of the name of Abijah mentioned in Old Testament history. One was the son of King Rehoboam, and his successor on

the throne of Judah. He was a bad man, and though one might have supposed that good blood flowed in his veins (for, both on his father's and his mother's side, he was descended from King David), he yielded himself up to idolatry and its attendant immoralities to such an extent, indeed, that the historian in the Second Book of Chronicles altered his name from Abijah to Abijam; in order, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, to avoid introducing the sacred word Jah (for Jehovah) into the name of so unworthy a character. The other Abijah was a youth of a very different spirit, and, though he came out of a bad nest, was a true child of grace. He was the young son of Jeroboam, and heir-apparent to the throne of Israel. A worse man than his father has rarely worn a crown upon his head. Scarcely had he seized the sceptre of government, than he forsook the worship of Jehovah, and not only gave himself up to gross idolatry, but compelled the people to follow his example. His name is notorious through all ages, as the man "who made Israel to sin."

To his son Abijah, Jeroboam was very tenderly attached. The lad took ill of a serious sickness, and his father was thrown into deep anxiety. Earnestly solicitous about the issue of the malady, Jeroboam sent his wife to one of the prophets of the true God, to inquire whether his son would recover. Why did he send to *him?* Why did he not apply to one of the idol-gods he had himself set up at Beersheba and Dan, and whom he had commanded all the people to worship? Ah! it is not difficult to tell the reason. When adversity comes upon ungodly men, when sorrow visits their dwelling, then they discover how vain are their earthly confidences, and how little support these yield them. Then Isaiah's words are verified, "Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee; they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them."

Heavy were the tidings with which his queen returned. She was instructed by the faithful prophet to acquaint her husband that their entire family, with one solitary exception, should die by violence and in disgrace, unlamented and unmourned; should

> "Go down
> To the vile dust from whence they sprung,
> Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

"Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat: and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the Lord hath spoken it."

The terrible prediction was fulfilled to the letter. Listen to the tragic story. "In the third year of Asa, king of Judah, did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead. And it came to pass when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant the prophet." To this fearful and wholesale extermination there was, as I have said, one solitary exception, and that exception was the dear and pious youth, of whom the Lord declared in my text, that "all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave (*i.e.*, shall die a natural death); because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel."

I have in these monthly addresses taken up a great many interesting Old Testament characters, but have never yet turned your attention to young Abijah; shall we look into this case this evening? I shall first consider the peculiar description of his piety which is given in the text, and then I shall draw some practical lessons from the subject.

I. Look for a little at *this description of his piety*. "In him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God

of Israel." What, think you, might this "good thing" be? Certainly, it was not his rank, nor wealth, nor power, nor intellect. As regards all these, I have no reason to suppose that the other members of that house were at all inferior to himself. Ah! these things commend not a soul to God; and not less precious in His sight is the youth that has been born in a peasant's cottage or a miner's cabin, than the scion of a noble house, or the heir-apparent to earth's highest throne.

And, as this "good thing" was not any mere material endowment, so neither was it any mere moral excellence. It does not mean simply that Abijah was what the world calls "good-hearted," "a good-living lad"; that he was amiable and well-behaved; that, in the midst of abounding debauchery, he preserved his virtue unstained. This, indeed, would be much, but it would not be expressed in the peculiar language of the text; "the good thing" was a "good thing towards the Lord God of Israel," a gracious, a spiritual, a divine, a holy thing. It was something that sprang not out of nature, nor of the flesh, something that his father did not give him, something that he never learnt from the royal but dissolute court of Israel. Fallen as we all are in Adam, we come into this world without a single good thing in us on which a holy God can look with pleasure; and even when grace has wrought a wondrous change, and made us new creatures in Christ Jesus, the words of Paul still befit our lips, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Let our dispositions be ever so amiable, and our outward life ever so correct, we are still "altogether as an unclean thing," till, by a power which comes from above, we have been born again. Do not any of you imagine that you are right with God, because you are right with man. The eye of a

generous and indulgent friendship may see in your character much to admire, and nothing to condemn; in the world's estimate you may be noble, and chivalrous, and good; and yet, for all that, you may be living under the frown of Him before Whom only spotless holiness can stand.

Gentlemen, I suppose that the doctrine of human depravity is an article of your creed; but I am not sure that with all of you it is a truth personally realised; yet, without this, you cannot savingly understand and accept the Gospel. I suspect the notion of many is that of a man of whom I knew, who, being asked to lead the devotion of a large assembly, began his prayer thus:—"O Lord, we are all sinners before Thee; at least, comparatively speaking (!)" It is my firm belief that there are not a few before me now who are uncontaminated by the vices of this great city, who are as moral and virtuous as they are amiable and kind; but, O my dear brother, do not forget that there may be in you many a good thing toward your family, and toward society, and toward the world at large, while as yet there is no work of grace, no "good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." That thing must be implanted in you by the Holy Spirit, and by Him, too, sustained. You remember Paul's words to young Timothy, "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us."

There are two things which, when found in a man, are good and acceptable to God. The first is *true repentance*, or what the Bible calls the "broken and contrite heart." Search the Scriptures through; you will find nothing of which it is said, as it is said of this, that it is well pleasing to the Lord—might this be the good thing that was found in Abijah? Some of you are apt to take a gloomy view of

your own state, although the Spirit has been dealing graciously with you; you fear that you have neither part nor lot in Christ's salvation, though it is your earnest desire to become His followers. Oh, if you have nothing else to offer to God but the sacrifice of a contrite spirit, there is some good thing in you toward the Lord God of Israel; and He who has begun the good work in you will perfect it unto the day of final redemption.

A second thing on which God specially sets the seal of His approbation is "*faith* in that one sacrifice which doth for sin atone." Amongst all the princes of the royal house, Abijah alone refused to worship the golden calves which his father had made. Jewish writers tell us that Abijah would not bow down to the idols; but insisted on worshipping the true God at Jerusalem. And when he tried, as best he could, to follow the ritual which Moses appointed, he doubtless saw therein, though it might be with dim and imperfect vision, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who should one day die for the sins of the world. His faith might have been but a little spark, but that secured his acceptance before God. Possibly some of you are bewailing your low spiritual state, and afraid to believe it possible that you are Christians; but if you have only been led to trample your own righteousness in the dust, and place your whole reliance upon Jesus as your substitute, then, amid all your unworthiness and imperfection, there is "some good thing" found in you: and He who put it there will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

But without these two things, "repentance from dead works, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," there is nothing in you that God can approve. I have some-

times been charged with putting too little of Gospel truth into these monthly sermons—of dwelling too much upon your material interests, and on those qualities that are likely to secure you honour and success in this world; to-day, then, let there be no uncertain sound, let every-one in this large assembly ask of himself the double question, "Have I yet repented of my sins? Have I yet trusted my soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus?" for, if the answer is "No," then there is no good thing in you; you are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

II. But now there are one or two special lessons to be drawn from the case of Abijah. 1. Do we not learn, for example, how *real piety may exist under most adverse and unfavourable circumstances?* Here was a youth, all of whose surroundings were of the worst possible character. An ungodly home, an idolatrous court, parents both wicked, every relative he had under the curse of God: why, you would say, piety could not live a day amid such conditions as these. Ah! the brightest diamonds have been found in the darkest mines, and the richest pearls in the deepest seas. Satan sometimes outwits himself. Sin is used to secure its own defeat. The very excess of Jeroboam's iniquity may have awakened disgust and recoil in the breast of his son. Even unconverted men are shocked by wickedness which exceeds their own. I have often been struck with the fact that young men who have left a godly home and a quiet neighbourhood, and have seen with wonder the vice and irreligion to be met with in London, have at once become far more earnest and more decided here than they were before. This very boldness of vice has made religion seem more real. The contrast has become more vivid. They have felt they must choose their side. It would not do to be neutral.

The sooner you all feel this the better. A young man says, "I am not a rake; I am not a prodigal; without professing to be a believer, I am fairly virtuous in my life." My brother, you will allow me to say, if you do not profess to be a believer, then you profess to be an unbeliever. O, if Abijah, nursed and brought up in a very hell of depravity, yet found the way to God, with what an awful responsibility will you be crushed, if, with all the hallowed memories of a Christian home, and of the Sunday-school, and of the blessed sanctuary of your youthful days, you are living without God in the world?

2. Again, I learn from our subject, that *even a young and brief life may be fruitful in blessing.* Young as he was, the whole nation mourned for him. I know it has been common to speak of Abijah as cut off in infancy. This I believe to be a mistake; and to arise from a misconception of the meaning of the word "child," applied to him in this chapter. According to Old Testament usage, the word may denote a full-grown youth; and it is far from probable that, had he been but a little boy, there would have been so public a funeral, and so general a lamentation over him. He must have attained such a period of life as to be capable of showing the excellence of his character, and of rendering some public service; and, probably, his acts gave so good promise of his future career, that the best men in the country augured a happier time when, in the course of nature, he should come to the throne. "Abijah," says the "Critical Commentary," "was of age, and considered by the people the heir to the throne."

In the highest view of it, the length of life is not to be judged by the number of its years. It is possible for the longest life to be briefer than the shortest; and the smooth-cheeked youth may die older, that is, with

more of life crowded into his brief history, than he whose stagnant and profitless existence drags on to an inglorious old age. That life is the longest—however limited the number of its years—in which God has been best served, and the world most benefited.

"They err, who measure life by years,
With false or thoughtless tongue;
Some hearts grow old before their time,
Others are always young."

What is more delightful than to see a man, at the very outset of life, addressing himself to some work or project whereby he may prove a blessing to others; not content to be a mere drone or selfist, but firmly determined to find some sphere of practical usefulness.

There is not a better feature of our time than the number of young men engaged in one form or another of Christian or philanthropic service. It does one's heart good to see the generous enthusiasm with which many a young fellow, who has but little time to himself, devotes that time to the public good, working busily in the cause of temperance, it may be, or in the Sunday-school, or in evangelistic effort, or in endeavours to get hold of other young men, and gather them under Christian influence. Noble fellows! God bless them, and give them a rich reward.

"He lives, who lives to God alone,
And all are dead beside;
For other source than God is none
Whence life can be supplied.
But life, within a narrow ring
Of giddy joys comprised,
Is falsely named, and no such thing,
But rather death disguised."

Finally, I learn from the brief story of Abijah, that *piety in life is the only guarantee of peace in death.* An

early departure from this world is not a thing to be dreaded, provided your heart is right with God. It is a touching thought to me, as I look round on this assembly, most of whom are in the bloom of youthful vigour, that according to all the laws of probability, some of you will never reach life's prime. Ere a few years have gone, the cannon shot of death will have thinned these ranks. Nor is it the most robust that will be spared. When I look back in memory on those who sat on the same bench with me at school, and on those who were my fellow-students at college, I am struck with the fact that some of those who seemed the most stout and hardy have been the first to be called away. To which of us the summons will first come, none can tell; but it may be to you who appear the most likely to live. You cannot reckon on a single year; nay, not upon a day. Oh, my dear friends, if you would come to your grave in peace, be it sooner, or be it later, there must be found in you "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel."

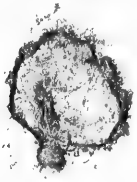
Your anticipations for this world may never be realised. Your plans and prospects for life may all be overthrown, and the fine "castles in the air" you have sometimes built be rudely cast to the ground. Already, perhaps, there is on the mind of some of you, just the suspicion that you are not to live long. That delicacy of heart, or lung, or throat, sometimes whispers the thought that, like Abijah, you shall be cut off in early life. Well if, like him, there is in you "some good thing toward the Lord," you need not be greatly distressed.

> "It matters little at what hour of day
> The Christian falls asleep; death cannot come
> To him untimely, who is fit to die;
> The less of this cold world, the more of heaven;
> The briefer time, the earlier immortality!"

I trust it may please God to spare you to see many and happy days; but the true way to throw a charm into life is to be ready for death. A young man, in the vigour of health, was thrown from a vehicle, and so severely injured that he was carried to a neighbouring house, and medical assistance sent for. As soon as the physician came, the sufferer said excitedly, "Sir, must I die? must I die? Deceive me not for a moment." He was told he could not live an hour. "Is it so," he exclaimed, "that I must go into eternity within an hour? I have made no preparation for this." His agonised friends bid him repent and believe in Jesus. "Repent and believe!" he cried, "I want all that explained, and death will not wait for explanations." Sure enough, within one hour the spirit had fled; and his last words (which were never answered) were, "What must I do to be saved?" The celebrated Dr. Paulus, Professor of Literature at Heidelberg, unhappily imbibed atheistical views. He denied everything supernatural. Specially would he not allow the immortality of the soul. When his fatal illness began, he declared that he was going to die, and that that would be the end of him. In this cheerless conviction he calmly awaited the closing scene. When it came, he lay in a speechless stupor for some hours. It was supposed he would never speak again. But at last he suddenly opened his eyes, raised them to the ceiling as though he saw something invisible to others, and starting to raise himself in bed, he exclaimed, "There is another life!" then fell back a corpse.

God forbid that any of you should have such a departure from this world! Will you risk it? Mind you, this great Book that is before me is true; or, if it is not true, it is a lie so stupendous that no human brain could

concoct it. Backed by evidences that are irresistible, I assert that it is the eternal truth of God by which you and I shall yet be judged; and I do now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, bid and beseech each one of you, lifting up your right hand to heaven, to vow that the God of Abijah shall be your God; and, whether your life be long or short, you shall come to your grave in peace, because in you shall be found "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." Amen.



BREAKERS AHEAD!

"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

"Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

PROVERBS iv. 14-15.

XI.

BREAKERS AHEAD!

"BREAKERS ahead!" Such was the startling cry that came from the man on the look-out, as the great steam vessel, at a speed of twelve or fifteen knots per hour, was bounding over a calm and peaceful sea. A dense fog had for some hours rested on the waters; but under the belief that there was plenty sea-room, and that no land was near, it had not been deemed needful to slacken speed.

Just then the curtain of mist began to rise, revealing to the watch the imminent danger: and not a moment too soon was the word of warning given: for, as the captain afterwards informed me, he instantly perceived to his horror a precipitous cliff standing like a wall at no great distance before him; and had not the wheel been at once pulled round, the ship must inevitably have dashed upon the rock, and have been shattered in pieces!

"Breakers ahead!" my young friends, is the cry that would be sounded in the ears of many of you, could we but see the perils that lie in your path. You have but lately left the quiet harbour, and put forth upon the open sea of life, and at present to your limited vision all seems fair and prosperous; but were the veil that hides the future only for a moment uplifted, you would see such dangers as just now you never dream of.

You are at a most interesting period of life—I might say, a most important and critical period. You are full of

purpose and hope; and that your purpose may be wisely directed, and your hope eventually realised, I wish to address to you some words of kindly warning: may they be blest to save you from the snares of the evil one.

May I take for the basis of my address the wise and earnest words which King Solomon spoke to his son, and which are so fitting to be uttered in the ear of every young person beginning life: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away"?

Whatever be the evil course that tempts you, your only safety lies in determined refusal to take a single step in that direction, to tamper for a moment with the temptation; and that this axiom may be as a nail fastened in a sure place, Solomon gives it six strong blows with the hammer, saying in regard to every such devious and sinful path, "Enter not, go not in it, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

That many of you, my young friends, are pure minded and right principled, I have not a doubt. It is your full purpose to be honourable in your actions, and virtuous in your life; but you have no conception of the traps that will be set for you, of the fascinations in which vice will clothe herself, or of the demons who will seek to waylay you, and, knowing that your only safety under God lies in your stubbornly resisting the first solicitations to evil, I entreat you to lay to heart the plain words of warning I offer.

At some unguarded moment, when you are least suspicious of danger, a door of strong temptation will open at your side, inviting you to greater pleasure than you have hitherto known; conscience, like a drugged watch-dog, will make but feeble remonstrance; and with honeyed words the devil will beckon you in.

At such a moment let there come to you, in voice of thunder, these prohibitory words, "*Enter not!*"

If already you have peeped within the panel, the wise man shouts, "*Go not in!*"

If you have actually taken the first step, draw it back instanter from the place of peril, as the word rings in your ear, "*Avoid it!*"

Lest the next time you should be overcome, "*Pass not by*" the spot.

That your safety may be still more sure, "*Turn from it*" in another direction altogether.

And, finally, to escape every risk of being caught, "*Pass away*" entirely from the scene of danger.

Do not be offended if I speak plainly to you; for there are no finer or more promising lads than some who have been inveigled into the very courses against which I am now to warn you.

I. The first I name is *the way of the fraudulent*. Very few men plunge all at once into a career of dishonesty. But many a youth, who has entered upon business with the strictest ideas as to truthfulness and fair dealing, soon gets these notions knocked out of him by observing the questionable practices that exist in trade; his conscience becomes less sensitive, and, presently, acts from which formerly he would have recoiled appear to him perfectly legitimate.

I am both surprised and indignant to hear men of whom better things might be expected, conniving at dishonourable courses or petty frauds, on the ground that they are necessary or universal. "You must just wink at a good deal of which you can hardly approve," I have heard such men say; "it is impossible to get on in the city if you are too strait-laced and scrupulous." Young men! I trust you will never condescend to such a standard of morality. It

is no excuse to assert that the practices to which I refer are accepted commercial customs, rendered necessary and therefore innocent by their universality. This is only to say that a sin has but to be widespread to transform it into a virtue, or at least to make it a justifiable act. It can never be either necessary or profitable to do wrong. If you cannot be rich without guile, be content to be poor. To *act* or *imply* what is false, is as bad as to utter a lie.

If it is not base to acquire gain by deception, then it is not a sin to steal.

And do you not observe that men who transact business after the fashion I am condemning, are the last to admit the axiom that we should do unto others as we would that they should do unto us? The very merchants who cheat by wholesale are the most unpityingly severe upon any clerk or subordinate who may take advantage of them, and the loudest *then* to condemn what they had been accustomed in their own actions to approve. Never be persuaded that, under any circumstances, the end can justify the means. Never be tempted to believe that a questionable act involves no guilt so long as it is not found out. Never allow yourselves to indulge in habits which tend to dull and deaden conscience. You will find it to your inestimable advantage all through life, to resist the first temptation to a compromise of principle, and to maintain a conscience absolutely "void of offence."

With an earnest and loving heart, I lay this matter before you. I warn you of the first evil course to which you may be tempted to deviate. I put you on your guard against unprincipled companions, who may turn up where you least expect them: and I beseech you, in the name of God, should you for a moment be tempted into the way of the fraudulent, that you "enter not, go not in it, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

II. I warn you against *the way of the extravagant;* against spending money you do not possess; against debt. Start in life as you mean to continue, and let this be one of your maxims, that you will "owe no man anything." Do not begin to borrow—rather do without the thing you desire till you have money to pay for it. If you once get into the way of purchasing in advance of your means, the habit will grow, and the debt will increase till it is like a millstone round your neck. Pay as you go, and count that as forbidden you which you have not money to buy. Deny yourself every luxury which your purse prohibits. Remember, debt is a rigorous tyrant, and, as Solomon says, "the borrower is servant to the lender." I link it here with extravagance, and justly so, for in most cases it is a love of show that tempts a young lad into the snare.

He admires a scarf or a breast-pin, and as he must have it, he purchases on credit, and ten to one, before he has money to pay, the one is threadbare, or the other is lost, and so he grudges payment, and is tempted to evade it. Thus the mischief grows. Don't seek to be too fine. Be manly enough just to appear as you are. Be content to begin life at the beginning, and to wait as others have done before you, till your income warrants this and that unnecessary indulgence. It is an awkward-looking arrangement when a youth begins with the large end of the horn, and comes out at the small end.

Young men; yes, and young women, too; listen to me. Never run into debt. Though you should have to wear a patched coat, and a cotton dress, rather do that than borrow.

I see so much of the trouble which people bring upon themselves by getting into debt, that I may be pardoned being terribly earnest with you on the point, and saying with reference to this path of folly, "Enter it not, go

not in it, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

III. I warn you against *the way of the gambler*. Detestable road! So vile and repulsive that one would imagine it unnecessary to utter a word of caution in regard to it; and yet the fact is, that there are tens of thousands of our young men being thus entrapped. This loathsome cancer is eating into the very vitals of English society. It honeycombs every stratum of the community. It colours the talk of the street. There is no vice that can put on such an aspect of innocence, and yet work such deadly mischief. If you want to see it in all the hideousness of its real character, look at the picture which the New Testament gives us of the soldiers betting over the clothes of the dying Redeemer. Horrible! See the revolting spectacle! The chief priests and scribes, indeed, are heartlessly mocking the sinless Sufferer. The thoughtless rabble are pushing, and driving, and shouting in hideous din; but no earthly creature save a gambler could be so lost to every feeling of humanity, as to sit down coolly in the vicinity of the cross, and take a bet on His seamless tunic.

But this these soldiers did: and their direct descendants may be seen to-day in the repulsive beings that lounge about the office of some sporting journal, when the news of a great horse race is expected; or in that poor bloated man with a couple of pigeons in his bosom; or in that besotted, half-idiot-looking wretch who is leading two or three small dogs by a string along the street. Verily, the breed of human-kind cannot lower go. And yet does not the moral leprosy extend to the highest in the land, when members of the Royal family patronise the Derby, and dukes and marquises stake large sums on favourite horses, and even Parliament adjourns and makes the occasion a

holiday? Oh the ruin of souls that must be laid at the door of this inexorable passion! How deplorably widespread is it throughout our land! You can hardly enter a hotel or a railway train, but you hear the language of betting-men, or have their literature thrust before your eye. Not a syllable can be said in its favour. It is evil, it is rotten to the core. The plague reaches down to the most trivial affairs of life. There is nothing so small, that some silly people will not bet upon it. Young men in particular are liable to this folly. Oh! my dear lads, do take my advice, and tamper not with the vice in any form whatever. Have the manliness to say, "No; I have made up my mind not to do it." Beware of small beginnings. Do not stake so much as a threepenny-piece. Whether it be with dice, or cards, or in any other way, refuse sternly to lay down money on hazard. It is not merely unwise; I can prove to you it is a sin. You throw away your money if you lose; you cheat if you win; for you have no right to take money from another, unless you render him a service for it. Betting diseases the mind, and unfits it for the duties of life. There is no evil course that is more insidious in its commencement, or more insatiable in the appetite it awakens. Therefore, in the name of God, I appeal to every one of you: "Enter not in it, go not in the way of it, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

IV. I warn you of *the way of the drinker*. The literature of the temperance question is now so prodigious, that a man must be a genius indeed who can contribute so much as a single fresh thought or argument upon it. That I do not attempt, and yet the startling cry, "Breakers ahead!" has no truer application than with reference to that fatal rock on which so many thousands of both sexes are yearly making shipwreck of their souls. I hope you have the

good sense to make such a disaster impossible by simply refusing to touch the dangerous thing.

That lad is—well, I simply call him a goose, a fool, who, knowing the ensnaring character of alcoholism, puts a drop to his lips. He does not need it; he is better without it. He does not really like it (for the taste is unnatural), and if he does take it, it is only from an aping at manliness, which betrays the weakest childishness. A youth never looks so silly as when he takes his first mouthful of liquor; and then, if you are not looking, with wry face spits it out again. I trust you will never be persuaded to take any other drink than that which God Almighty has brewed for all His children. The man who offers you an intoxicant deserves that it should be dashed back into his face; for, by that act of his, for aught he knows, he is imperilling your whole future welfare. I am no wild, rabid preacher of abstinence. I do not deny that in certain instances alcohol may prove medicinally useful; all the more do I claim your conviction, when I entreat you not to touch the article; to keep a hundred miles away from the temptation; and should the door of the tavern or the gin-palace invite you, "enter not, go not in it, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

V. I warn you against *the way of the libertine.* I should grievously fail in duty did I not caution you against the faintest approach to impurity. There is no species of vice on which the Word of God is more explicit—none on which is threatened more terrible punishment. Indeed, on this matter the Bible does not so much speak as thunder—bolt after bolt, peal after peal—warning us of the awful consequences of carnal indulgence, both in this life, and in that which is to come. I am not going to lift the curtain, as, under other circumstances, I might do, and expose the haunts of licentiousness, nor turn the bull's-

eye lantern on that "house which is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." God knows, I love you too well to conceive it possible that you should sink to such bestial degradation. But I implore you to keep at the remotest distance from the vestige of pollution, and refuse to touch, even with a pair of tongs, a lewd and loose companion who would entrap you into evil. Such a man is more to be shunned than the cholera poison. Shut your ear against every whisper of immodesty. Turn your eye from every impure picture. Fling out of your reach every tainted book.

"Keep thyself pure"; for, if once that purity be gone, you have lost the most precious jewel in your casket; and it never can be recovered. I am not forgetting the innate depravity of our fallen nature, when I say that there is a certain original purity of thought and feeling which, once defiled, no fuller's soap can cleanse. True, the sin may be repented of and forgiven, but you can never regain what you have lost. I speak of a class of sin to which St. Paul applies the word, "Flee!" for the only safety is in flight. Keep far away from it; for one vile thought, entertained rather than resisted, may be like a spark on a magazine of gunpowder. My dear young friends, I do pray you may know how blessed it is to be pure in heart and clean in life; and therefore I entreat you, should you be tempted into the path of unchastity, "Enter it not, go not into it, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." I must give the text yet one more application.

VI. Let me warn you against *the path of the scoffer*. Some of you may have seen an old German print which represents a game of chess, the parties engaged being a young man on the one side and the prince of evil on the other. The picture is full of meaning. There sits Satan, bending over the board, with a cynical grin upon his face, and an air of

conscious superiority, as he lightly fingers the pieces, and seems about to checkmate his rival. The lad sits pensive and anxious, for he has staked his soul upon the issue of the game. There appears no hope for him; and indeed there would be none, were it not that, unseen, there stands, almost invisible, an angelic form behind him, who turns the victory in his favour. It is the angel of the covenant, the Divine Counsellor, whose skill works marvels on the board, and at last defeats the destroyer. Be sure, young men (for the devil will try this game with each of you), unless you have a Divine Friend to help you, you will be the easy victims of his craftiness. You will be assailed on every side of your being. If he does not succeed through the lusts of the flesh, he will probably attack you on the intellectual side of your nature. He will inject all sorts of doubts, start strange and unanswerable questions, present old truths in a grotesque aspect, and so get you off the rails into the trackless regions of freethought and unbelief. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Know that it is all coming, or may come, and be prepared for the assault.

This danger almost always springs out of unwise companionships. One sceptic in an office may unsettle all his fellows. By his sneers, his innuendoes, his exaggerations, he may do a world of mischief. One fool can raise a question which fifty wise men may be unable to answer.

Remember, there is far more for revelation than against it. For every argument against Christianity there are a hundred in its favour. There are no men so credulous as infidels. As Napoleon once said of Duroc, these men will believe anything provided it is not in the Bible. Atheism has far more to do with the heart than with the head. The best brain of our country, by a long way, is on the side of God and of the Bible. Do not go into the company

of scoffers. Do not visit the so-called Halls of Science, or temples of infidelity. Far better strengthen your faith than put it in peril. Hold aloof from all who laugh at what is sacred, or speak disrespectfully of the best of books. Better a thousandfold be robbed of your purse than robbed of your religion. It is not unlikely you may be invited into sceptical society, or urged to attend some infidel or secularist meeting; but again I appeal to you, in the words of King Solomon, "Enter it not, go not into it, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

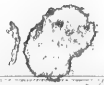
Dear young friends, these are plain words I have addressed to you; God knows they come out of the deepest convictions of my heart. Although the dangers which lie before you in the future are many, there is no reason that you should fall. God is able to make you stand. His grace can keep you from falling. And it is promised to all who believe the Gospel, and accept of Jesus as their perfect Saviour. Oh, trust then in His atoning blood! Without delay grasp His outstretched hand, saying, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

The only strength which will avail you in the hour of strong temptation comes from Him. You cannot afford to dispense with this heavenly aid. May God by His grace help you all to steer a safe course amid the many dangers which will surround you. So that by-and-by you will be able, in the beautiful words of Addison, to say:—

"When in the slippery paths of youth
With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm, unseen, conveyed me safe,
And led me up to man.
Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,
It gently cleared my way;
And through the pleasing snares of vice,
More to be feared than they."

Amen.

FEEDING ON ASHES.



"*He feedeth on ashes.*"—Isa. xliv. 20.

XII.

FEEDING ON ASHES.

WHO does? Of whom is the prophet speaking? He is speaking of the man who strives to satisfy the God-ward yearnings of his nature by worshipping a deity of his own creation. We have just had in this chapter a most graphic description of the idolater's folly. With a dash of pungent satire, Isaiah shows what a silly man he is. We have here the whole process of god-manufacture. The poor devotee selects a cedar, or a cypress, or an oak, which probably his own hands planted many years ago; and, having hewn it down, sets to work with line, and plane, and chisel, to fashion it into the resemblance of a human being. This being done, he places it in a shrine or temple, and falls down before it, and worships it. What becomes of the rest of the tree? Oh, with it he makes a blazing fire to warm himself, or to bake his bread! So that it is quite a chance which portion of the wood becomes a god, and which portion turns to ashes on the hearth; the same tree suffices to cook food for his hungry body, and to provide an object of adoration for his hungry soul. The man is an utter fool, only to be ridiculed and laughed at; and the prophet holds him up to the derision of all sensible men, as one whose head is surely turned, or who has fairly lost his wits. You and I wonder how men could ever be so stupid as to fashion gods of wood, or iron, or stone, and then bow down and do homage to them. We think that nowadays, at all events, the second command-

ment might be safely expunged from the Decalogue. But we forget that, although human customs may have changed, the human heart is still the same. Idolatry is by no means a thing of the past. There is within the soul of man a powerful craving for some object to worship. The soul was made for God, and cannot be happy without Him. If it does not find Him, it must find some other object, out of and beyond itself. There is an insatiable hunger, which, if not appeased and quieted by the knowledge of God, will compel the soul to feed on meaner objects—to seek satisfaction in wealth, or carnal pleasure, or gaiety, or favour, or fame, or literature, or some other earthly resource; and when a man, yearning after blessedness, seeks it rather in these than in the true God, he makes the same foolish mistake as did the idolater whom the prophet describes; and of the one, as well of the other, may it be said, that "he feedeth on ashes."

Though there are not a few of you, my dear brothers, who, thank God, are now living on very different diet, having "meat to eat that the world knows not of," yet there are hundreds of young men in this city—and, I doubt not, some here to-night—who are still making the awful blunder of the text, "spending money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not"; and to such I am now to appeal to put away that miserable fare, and feed upon the manna that cometh down from Heaven!

That your souls are hungry, I am as sure almost as I am of your existence. There is a deep unrest comes over you, that makes you feel you want something, in order to be truly happy. I think young men, and specially if they live alone, feel this more than any other class of people. You often get into a queer, morbid, dejected state, and you wonder what is the matter with you. Life doesn't seem worth

living. Everything around you seems an unreality, a sham. You wish you were something else than you are. You sometimes wish you were dead. You cannot interest yourself, as you know you ought to do, in the matters of your daily business and avocation.

What can it be that makes you so restless and unsatisfied? Some people call it stupidity; others call it nervousness; a third class call it the fidgets; but I will tell you what the Bible calls it. *Hunger.* Hunger of soul. It is the craving of an appetite which God Himself has put within you. And there is only one object in all the universe that can appease that craving. Your soul was formed to know, and love, and serve the Lord; it has gone away far from Him; and till it come back to Him, it cannot be happy.

> "My heart is pained, nor can it be
> At rest, till it finds rest in Thee."

But, you say, some people appear to get on tolerably well, and to be fairly happy, without religion. Yes, for a while. It is strange what fancies a diseased appetite may assume. It is possible a man may come to enjoy crunching cinders. I recollect a case in point. I remember a gentleman of my acquaintance whose reason gave way; and one of the first evidences of his lunacy was his fancy for ashes! We know that in some parts of the world there is a class of persons called earth-eaters, who are in the regular practice of using certain kinds of sand or clay for food. From time immemorial the Chinese have been in the habit of eating earth along with their bread. There are districts in India, where, as in the island of Java, a reddish kind of earth is actually baked into cakes, and sold in the markets for food; and Humboldt mentions a species of clay which the natives of South America knead into balls, and store up in quantities as a luxury.

Well, every man to his taste, but we cannot believe that any one can be nourished by such diet. We call it an unnatural, a perverted, a depraved appetite. Sooner or later it must prove fatal to the person who indulges it. No human being in his right senses would feed on earth or ashes.

And so it is spiritually. Hear what the prophet says in this verse: "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside." The deceived heart is the source of the depraved appetite. Oh that God would help me to undeceive some hearts here to-night, that they may lose their relish for "ashes," and may hunger for the bread which cometh down from Heaven!

Now, that fine old man, who was so deeply interested in young men—I mean the Apostle John—warns you against the indulgence of this depraved appetite. "I write unto you, young men," he says, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"; and then he speaks of it as taking a three-fold form, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." I shall borrow his suggestion, and speak of three classes of young men—all of them known to myself—who are "feeding on ashes."

I. Those who are giving themselves up to *sensual pleasure.* Now, look here: I never say to a man who has half a mind to become a Christian, you must give up the pleasures of the world. There is no one on earth who has so much right to the pleasures of the world as the believer. It is the greatest mistake imaginable to suppose that when a man becomes truly religious, he is at once to give up all the luxuries of life, and live on brown bread and prison fare. I do not believe in asceticism. I do not believe in pious melancholy. With all the thunder of my indignation, I rebuke the young men who ape being monks. The

religion of Christ is on the side of joyousness, and liberty, and manliness. No room, lighted up for marriage festival, is so bright and gay as the heart that is right with God. If I want to see sunshine in a human face, I look out for the truest, sincerest Christian I know. The most saintly man I ever saw—or expect to see till I get to Heaven—was McCheyne of Dundee; and his buoyancy of spirit knew no bounds. I'll tell you a secret, if you will promise me not to repeat it. One Monday morning, after the labours of the Sabbath, McCheyne was walking in the country, along with one or two of the best and holiest ministers Scotland has ever known; all of them in the bloom of youth. They were crossing a field, and McCheyne, bounding forward, started "leap-frog," in which the others heartily joined. But a grave and aged elder, who had witnessed the sport, came up and solemnly rebuked the divines, who good-humouredly confessed the awful heinousness of their crime, and promised never to do the like again!

But this innocent hilarity, which leaves no ill results behind, is good and healthful, and a very different thing from the emmaddening gaieties of the world. How many who give themselves to constant party-going, and dancing, and midnight carousals, find, ere they have been long at it, what a wretched existence it is. Amid the blaze of gaslight, and the song, and the revelry, they are in ecstasy; but in the morning, jaded and depressed, they can only exclaim, "Ashes, ashes!" "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." Heap on the furze and whins! What a glorious blaze! What a merry crackle! See the sparks and flames! Jolly fire, is it not? Sir, in ten minutes you shall look into that grate, where you are striving to make

your pot of pleasure boil, and you shall see nothing but a handful of ashes! "Before your pots can feel the thorns, He will take them away as with a whirlwind, both living and in His wrath."

I know there are some young men that laugh at the old-fashioned folks who have their tea at five o'clock in the afternoon, and their heads on the pillow by ten. "Why," they say, "that is just the time when the night and the pleasure begin." And so they turn night into day, and think they have a fine time of it. "Fast" young men! Yes, indeed! they are "fast," for they hurry swiftly through all the real enjoyment of life; and if they are not prematurely laid in the churchyard or cemetery, they at least soon feel that the charm, the glow, of existence is gone, and with bloated cheek and sunken jaw, can only sigh over all these sensual delights, "Ashes, ashes!"

I know you won't be angry with me for touching so often on the point, or if you are I cannot help it, for every day I see the frightful curse of drink, and I would to God that my poor words to-night might be the saving of some one here from the loathsome pit into which so many are slipping. A wise man among the ancients once said that the vine-cluster had three grapes—pleasure, drunkenness, misery. If you resolve to have the first, you shall also have the second, and the third. When a man drinks intoxicants for the pleasure of it, there is hardly a chance for him. Three or four men in a hundred may escape, or perhaps five; but I believe that 95 per cent. go straight down the road to wretchedness and ruin. To tens of thousands the public-house, the grog shop, the drinking saloon, has been simply the antechamber of hell. Why, I could tell you of gentlemanly young fellows, who, the first time they entered such a place, felt a sense of shame, and

looked this way, and that way, and behind, to see if any one observed them, and then crept stealthily in; now, they will stand for an hour at the bar, or sit in the tap-room, without a blush upon their face: and so they go galloping down the fatal steep, till, at last, the crash will come, and, amid the ravings of delirium, they will see a jeering, blaspheming crew dancing around the foaming cups, and spirits of the damned, with skeleton fingers, holding aloft the brimming flagons; whilst forms, more hideous than Hogarth ever painted, shall join in wild huzzah of death, and, pointing to these so-called delights of sense, will shriek out with fiendish sneer, "Ashes, ashes!" "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside." But

II. I have a word to say to you who are setting up another idol for your worship. It is neither Venus nor Bacchus, but it is Plutus; it is *worldly substance;* it is money. There is no doubt of it; mammon, in one or other of its many forms, is the man-created deity, whom large numbers are bowing down to with a devotion whose blindness is only equalled by its fervour. You may turn with loathing from the coarser pleasures on which I have touched, and yet as truly fall within the description of the text; for every one is preferring "ashes" to bread who is seeking food for his soul in things created rather than in the Creator. "The covetous man, who is an idolater." Such is the language of St. Paul. It is not my business this evening to speak of the sinfulness of such idolatry, but to tell you that every one who makes the world his god is laying up for his soul starvation and disappointment.

"The world with stones instead of bread,
My hungry soul has always fed;
It promised health; in one short hour
Perished the fair but fragile flower;

It promised riches; in a day
They made them wings, and flew away;
It promised friends; all sought their own,
And left my widow'd heart alone."

Gentlemen, do not mistake me; it is not from this pulpit that you will ever hear a sentimental tirade against energy in business, against a laudable ambition to do well for this world, and secure, not only a competency, but an abundance. There is no sin in desiring to be rich, if your money comes to you honourably, and goes from you usefully. Ay, but what is all that, if that is all? Can you feed the immortal soul within you with bank cheques and good investments? Will all the gold in the Bank of England appease the hunger of your deathless spirit? Oh no! But many seem to think it will. They put out of their mind every other thought. If you go into their office and approach the outermost verge of the subject of religion they say, "Shut up; none of that talk here." So determinately do they keep all serious things out of their mind, that, after a while, when the evening shades of life begin to fall, and when they think they must give a little attention to these things, they can't. They have become so saturated with worldliness that they are positively incapable of a devout feeling.

Such men are the most hopeless cases to deal with that I know of. I should be more sanguine of rescuing and bringing to the feet of Jesus a poor bloated debauchee, than of doing any good to one of these hardened, wizened, shrivelled-up money-scrapers, who for twenty, thirty, or forty years have no other thought but this—to lay up gain. We have known some of them here; and what sort of evening of life have they had? Oh, do not ask me!

Some time ago, I read in the papers of a little boy who, for months had been gathering up prune-stones, being fond of the kernel; so, wishing to prepare for himself a great treat, he laid up quite a large store: at last came the day of anticipated enjoyment; he ate them all, and, after hours of agony, died! So I have seen men who have given up their whole life to one aim, to amass wealth; preparing a banquet of enjoyment for the evening of their days; and, when they sat down to the feast, lo! on the table only ashes, ashes!

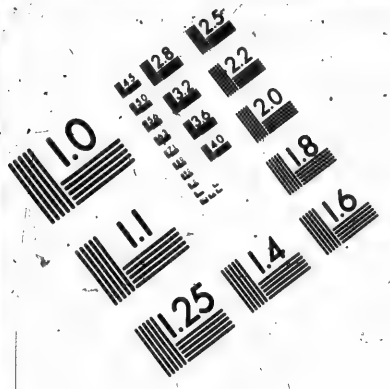
Oh, what an array of testimony I could bring you were it necessary! Call over the roll; and be quick about it, for time's passing on. The worldling happy? "No!" shouts the late Duke of Brunswick, who dared not sleep out of his house one night, lest his fabulous collection of diamonds should be stolen. "No!" exclaims the late Mr. Rothschild, "how can a man be happy, when, just as you are going to dine, you have a letter put in your hand, saying, 'If you do not send me £500, I will blow your brains out.'" "No!" cries the late William Astor, the millionaire of New York, who a few days before his death worried himself till he was sick, because some of his rents had gone down. I might go on summoning the living as well as the dead; but why should I weary you? Do you not know, that though you could hold this globe in your grasp so long as it shall endure, it shall one day be shrivelled to a cinder; and, amid the blast of the archangel's trumpet, and the crash of final dissolution, all its pomp, and wealth, and splendour shall be consumed by fire: whilst over the world, which men have hugged so closely and loved so well, and with which they have sought to fill their immortal souls, will be written in letters of smoke the doleful epitaph, "Ashes, ashes"?

III. There is a third class of men who are daily

"feeding on ashes" (because "a deceived heart has turned them aside"), and I want a word with them before we say to each other, "Good-night." They have got hold of a lot of *infidel literature*, and they are stuffing their souls with as weak and poisonous rubbish as it is possible to meet with. "Oh," you say, "did you read that article in the last number of such and such a review? Have you read the book just brought out by such and such an author?" and you put the question with the air of one who imagines that Dr. This, or Professor That, has clean swept away the whole doctrinal foundation of our ancient Christianity. Keep your mind easy, my friend; the Gospel lives still. Our religion has stood a good number of these attacks, and means to stand a good many more. You cannot do better than adopt the sound advice which Mr. Gladstone gave a short time ago to the students at Glasgow: Meet doubt with decision, meet scepticism with scepticism, meet question with question. If a difficulty is thrown at you, like a bombshell from the infidel camp, it is certainly quite as easy for you to throw back a difficulty from the Christian entrenchment. The fact is, these attacks are as old as the Gospel; they have their day; they make an agitation, and then they are forgotten. I am happy to tell you that the fortress of Christian truth was never stronger or more impregnable than it is now. Thoughtful men have tried worldly philosophies, and find they won't do. The discoveries and conclusions of this wise man contradict the discoveries and conclusions of that. The tide is turning. Some of our men of science are speaking more respectfully of the Bible than they did a few years ago. We are certainly very much obliged to them. I have read articles of living scientists, which I am sure they would not write now. Do not you give up an inch of ground. The meanest cant in the world is the cant of infidelity. Do not

apologise for Christianity; it is the duty of sceptics to apologise to you, for they would rob you of the most precious thing you possess. There is a sort of affectation of intellectualism, which tempts many off from the old evangelical rails. If a young man begins to speak against the Bible, it is presumed he must be very clever. If he rejects the atonement, and the doctrine of future punishment, and the mystery of the Trinity, and goes in for a vague creedless religion of self-culture, he is a thinking man. Oh, what folly! Let me assure you that the best brain of this country is on the side of Christianity. Let me certify you, that the day is coming when all these pretentious philosophisings will prove utterly worthless to comfort or cheer your soul. In the day when your health fails; in the day when the fickle world cheats you; in the day when a little coffin is brought into your dwelling; in the day when you feel that there's a spot in yonder cemetery more sacred to you than any spot on earth,—ah! then the pratings of a heartless infidelity will be hateful to you, and you will be glad to go upstairs and take your forgotten Bible out of the trunk, and seek within its blessed pages for a comfort nothing else can give you! I know what you will think then of all the grandiloquent lucubrations of a pompous rationalism, with which you had vainly tried to feed your soul: "ashes! ashes!"

With the prophet, therefore, I invite you to something more palatable and nourishing; I bid you to a feast of "milk and honey"; "hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." I feel as though I could go on speaking to you for an hour, but that would be most unwise, so I stop. But fain would I catch at least one soul in the Gospel net to-night; whom shall it be? There are many young men here, who are earnest, decided, happy



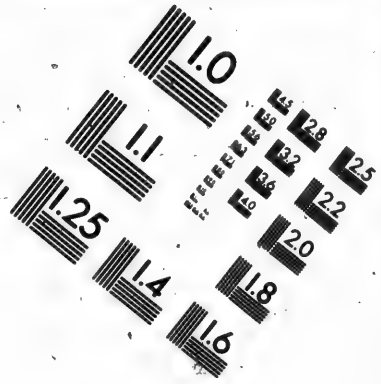
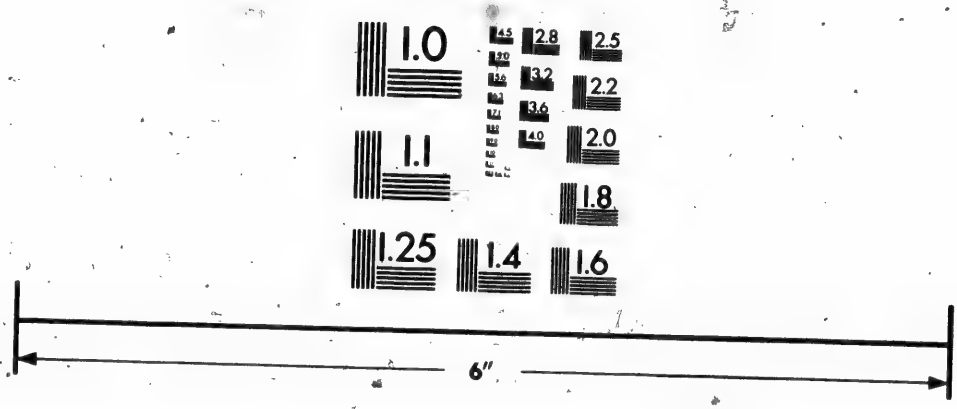
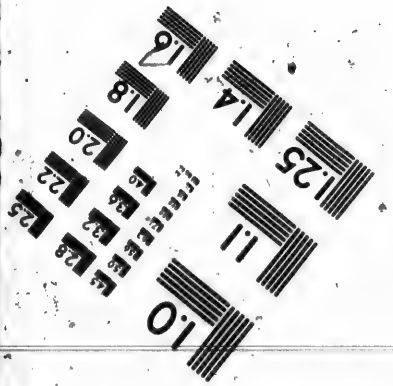
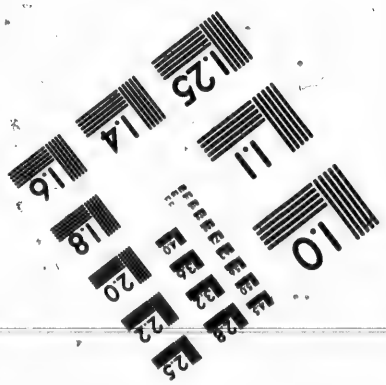


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)







Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716)-872-4503

Christians. I do not speak to them. I shall take the one hundred in this audience who are furthest from God. No, I would narrow the matter down, and stretch the cord of the Gospel around the twenty hardest, darkest souls in this assembly. That does not satisfy me yet; I shall take the five of you whose salvation seems to be almost impossible. No, I will go lower still, I want the one who is the worst of the five. I address myself at this moment to the most godless and wretched man within this building. The Lord knows who you are, though I do not. My brother, here, in Christ's name, I offer you the hand of help and sympathy. You are not too far gone for Divine mercy to save. Though to this hour you have been "feeding on ashes," Heaven spreads a banquet before you to-night, and beckons you to come and partake. Can you hesitate another moment? On that very seat where you are sitting determine that Satan has had the last of you, and that you will no more feed your soul with the offal of hell. God help that young man! Others have been blest before at these services, why not you to-night? Up! and from this hour be a new life begun! Say, I've had enough of sin, and enough of the flesh; I have now done with all; Lord, I want the Living Bread that cometh down from Heaven!

"With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels' bread to feast?"

THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS HARD.

"*The way of transgressors is hard.*"—PROV. xiii. 15.

XIII.

THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS HARD.

THE truth which is condensed in these words of King Solomon I take to be this, that in regard to a large class of sins, and especially those sins into which young men are apt to be ensnared, retribution follows in the present life. Sin never pays. A course of vice is not only a crime, but a blunder. When men sin, they do it in expectation of happiness; the happiness does not come, but, on the other hand, wretchedness. Not once within the past six thousand years has a man reaped a single advantage by doing wrong. In every instance without exception, in which a man has sinned, he has been the poorer and the sadder for it.

Sin means sorrow, distress, pain, whether that pain follows immediately, or after a while. You cannot sin without suffering damage.

Thus far, in a general way, I suppose, we all assent to the truth; and, though men try to shut it out of their minds, there are few who have not the deep innate conviction that God will bring them into judgment for the errors they have done.

But, as I apprehend, this is not the particular truth that lies before us here. What the wise man lays down is that, in regard to a large class of sins, retribution follows *now*, in this present world. A young man turns aside from the path of virtue, and he has not long pursued that forbidden path before he has reason most bitterly to rue it.

It promised to be a pleasant road. It looked smooth, flowery, and enticing: but it turned out to be "hard," or, as the original means, stony, rough, and rugged. We are all familiar with the Bible expressions, "the way of holiness," "the way of truth," "the path of the just," "the way of the righteous"; these are all different names for the same one road—the road that leads to God and to life everlasting. But, diverging from that, there are many paths that lead to ruin: and very tempting do some of them appear. You look down this avenue and that, and oh, how attractive is the view! Everything to bewitch, and charm, and promise pleasure! A greenwood path perhaps, festooned with trees, and carpeted with flowers! Such it seems at its opening, but, as you advance, the vision vanishes; the flowery turf changes into sharp rugged stones; and with sore and bleeding feet you are forced to own, "the way is hard!" It is not merely that it leads to destruction; that its terminus is dark and hopeless despair; but that the way itself proves unutterably painful.

Confessedly, its earliest steps are not so, or it would offer you no temptation.

To some of you who are yet young in the ways of the world, the paths of vice promise intense enjoyment; it is the way of the righteous that seems so hard. To be a thorough Christian, to be decided for the Lord, to disjoin yourself from all wicked associates, and keep at a distance from every form of dissipation and folly; it is this, you think, that is so hard—so hard, as to be almost impossible.

And, on the other hand, to yield to your lower appetites and passions: to follow where the flesh would lead you: to give up the restraints of religion, and dash in amid all

the gaieties and merriments with which the devil ensnares the unwary; oh! this is so easy, so natural, so inviting, you are tempted to bid conscience go about its business, and make at least a brief trial of a free and voluptuous life.

And yet, you have not gone far on these respective paths, when you are brought to a very different conclusion. "The way of the righteous" becomes every day smoother and more blessedly delightful; "the way of transgressors" turns out to be rough and hard. Oh, what sad, sad hearts are wandering these streets every day; men who were beguiled by the fascination and glitter of vice, and now find they have been cheated and befooled! Could we but see men through and through, and watch them to the end; had we but some spiritual stethoscope to reveal what is going on within the breast; there are persons rubbing shoulders with us every day, who are already suffering the untold agonies of inextinguishable remorse!

I sometimes think that, from exceptional circumstances, it has been specially my lot for a number of years to come in contact with a large number of such cases. I could fill a book with the record of instances which have come under my own observation, of young men, once the joy of their parents and an ornament to society, who in the hour of temptation fell, and have gone from bad to worse, till now they are mere wrecks—situation gone, money gone, health gone, character gone, power of will gone, hope gone, and they themselves pictures of abject misery, fit for nothing but to be warnings to others, as they wail forth the bitter confession of the text:—"The way of transgressors is hard!"

Some years ago, a godly minister from the country, who had taken a special interest in the spiritual welfare of

the young men of his flock, happened to be in London. Passing along Cheapside one day, he took refuge from a shower of rain in the Mansion House, where the Lord Mayor was sitting in Court. On the following morning, whilst calling at the office of a friend, a letter was handed to him, which had been thrust in under the door. The letter was as follows:—

"*Tuesday evening.*

"DEAR SIR,—As I was walking up Ludgate Hill this morning you passed me. It is ten years since I left ——; but I knew you instantly, and forward this line to tell you I am glad to see you looking so well, and that the sight of your familiar face induced a number of pleasing reflections in connection with bygone scenes; but of agonising remorse at the maddening recollection, that, from the neglect of those principles you endeavoured to inculcate, I find myself a young man stripped of fortune, friends, character, and hope of the world to come—a mere wreck—a waif on the restless waves of life, that sway to and fro in this desert city! What would I not give to recall the past! The text, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,' thunders in my conscience constantly. I find it true in temporal affairs as well as spiritual. The next you hear of me will be in the list of those who seek to bury their sorrows in the waters of the Thames. That a coffee-house is my study, is my only excuse for this rude scrawl. I thought these feelings I had smothered for ever, but conscience will be heard, despite all. I wilfully silenced her, and now I can trace the retributive hand of Providence in the results of every false step. I saw you at the Mansion House again in the afternoon. I hope you will refrain from making inquiries as to my name, as it would be labour thrown away. All I ask is an interest in your prayers."

You can well believe that the perusal of this letter awakened a painful interest in the mind of the minister. Intensely desirous to meet with the writer, yet having no clue, he seemed to have a hopeless task before him. However, he determined to try. The following advertisement was inserted next morning in the "agony column" of the *Times* newspaper:—

"A young man, who on the 23rd inst. addressed a note to R. E. M., which was left at an office in Gresham Street, is earnestly requested to send his name and address to the said R. E. M., 356, Post Office, B——, who will be rejoiced to relieve him."

Little was expected from this, but it was a bow drawn at a venture. It was not long before a letter, addressed as above, reached the minister by post (I give it you word for word):—

"*City, Monday.*

"DEAR SIR,—I see that time, that destroys all things, has not altered your character—ever kind, generous, and anxious to succour the distressed. Accept my best and heartfelt thanks for your kind communication in the *Times;* but I regret that you should have been at the trouble and expense of insertion, as it is impossible for me to avail myself of it at the present. The past, the present, and the future equally forbid a disclosure of my private history; and yet you are the only person to whom I could, I think, unbosom myself, or from whom I could seek advice; but not now. Do not waste another thought upon one who is totally unworthy of everything but contempt and derision from all good men. Could I persuade myself that there was no hereafter, how gladly would I seek annihilation;

but it is a hopeless task—the instincts of my better part are unfortunately too truthful to be deluded with a lie. What an awful reality is life, and what a dream has been mine! Commencing with novel-reading, and ending in vice, misery, and disease! Such are a few of the least evils I am now reaping. I remain, dear sir, yours gratefully, ————."

This is but one of hundreds, ay, of thousands of such cases which occur every year in this metropolis, many of which never come to light, but end in some dark lodging in the slums, or in the workhouse, or asylum, or banishment.

Nay, it is a solemn and touching thought to me, that in all likelihood there are one or two present this evening who are just on the verge of such a career, and within whose consciences a voice is whispering, as I point to the downward course of the profligate, "That's me! that's me!"

Were I not bound in honour to strict confidence, I could read you many a letter as distressing as those I have given you; and you will not wonder that, as I peruse each one, I lay it down with a sigh, and find myself saying, "The way of transgressors is hard!"

I might endeavour to deter you from evil courses by telling you of the judgment to come; by picturing the scenes of that dread day, when you will be summoned to God's great assize, and have to render an account of the deeds done in the body; and by setting before you the horrors of a lost eternity: but that is not my *rôle* this evening. What I wish to impress upon all of you who are still living after the flesh is, that there is a day of reckoning

even here; that there is a day of judgment on this side of the grave; a day of judgment in the conscience, or, at least, in the nerves, in the liver, in the bones, in the brain. How the Psalmist reproached himself for momentarily being such a fool as to envy the wicked! Why, he gets quite wild at finding himself so idiotic; for he had been "envious at the foolish, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked." Just as an outspoken Englishman of to-day, if he finds he has made some outrageously stupid blunder, exclaims, "What a fool, what an ass I have been!" precisely so does the Psalmist, "So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee." As though he would say, "Had I the intelligence of man, I ought to have known better than to suppose that a life steeped in sin can ever be a happy one."

Look, for example, at the misery which *intemperance* brings. I could bring you instance upon instance of young men who have sat in these very seats, from whose bright faces and engaging manners we had augured a long and happy career; and now they are wrecked, bloated, haggard, unfit for anything, and hastening to a premature grave. You look at them in the outset of their fatal career, and all seems pleasant and safe. For it is not the mean, selfish men that are mostly ensnared by this vice, but the warm, generous, large-hearted natures that have not the firmness to say "No."

At the beginning all is delightful and fair. Yonder in the brilliant saloon, when the wine goes round, giving its colour in the cup; yonder, where a few choice spirits sit over the genial glass far into the night: and song, and wit, and humour flow; there is much, there is everything, to dazzle and allure. And many a raw, inexperienced youth looks on with a kind of wonder, and is almost ashamed

because he is not expert in the things that give pre-eminence in such a company; ashamed because one glass makes him giddy, and one pipe makes him sick, and he is not like those dashing blades that seem up to everything!

Ah, my boy! that was ten years ago; and now see the other end! Ask now, where are all who formed that jolly circle? Ay, where are they? Ask Abney Park, and Highgate, and Kensal Green!

And some of them, though they still live, might as well be dead. Exiled, broken-hearted, bitten with remorse, bankrupt in character, mere fragments of men, crawling through life, hardly daring to look you in the face. A few, I grant, may have escaped, and recovered themselves ere it was too late; but as for most of them, if they are spared, their sap is gone: they are prematurely withered; they kept a hundred wicks burning at once, and used themselves up in their youth; and now, the victims of hopeless despair, with not a ray of comfort in memories of the past, nor in anticipations of the future, they can only mutter, with deep sepulchral voice, "The way of transgressors is hard!"

Look again at the misery which *licentiousness* entails. In the words of Hamlet, I might say—

> ". . . But that I am forbid
> To tell the secrets of this prison-house,
> I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
> Would harrow up your soul."

There is no form of sin so terrible in its power, so cruel to its victims, so cancer-like in its consumption of the soul's capacity for happiness. Sure and speedy is the Nemesis that pursues indulgence of sins of the flesh. Purity is a jewel which, once lost, cannot, in some sense, be regained.

Upon sincere repentance, through Divine mercy, pardon may indeed be found; but you can never in this world be what you would have been, had you earnestly resisted the tempter, and overcome.

Need I remind you, too, how awful is the confirmation which the text receives in the career of the *gambler?* The dice-box and card-table, however innocent they may seem, are responsible for an amount of moral mischief and human wretchedness that are simply inconceivable. The appetite for betting, once formed, becomes so imperious, that everything must yield to it; let a man meet with but one or two successes, he plunges head foremost into the fatal vortex; no principle can restrain him; honesty, truth, reputation, domestic ties, everything must go to the winds; the insatiable craving must be gratified; and through indulgence of this passion, thousands have brought upon themselves, even in this world, the agonies of hell. Young men! be wise, and tamper not with this evil in its most innocent form.

And I have marked, too, how the way of the *fraudulent* is hard. How cunningly the arch-tempter beguiles into this snare many a youth who deems himself incapable of the smallest act of dishonesty! He makes the path very slippery. The first few steps seem innocent and safe. Borrowing, speculating, prevaricating, making false entries, downward glides the unconscious victim, till at last the disclosure comes.

Perhaps this went on for a year or two, and the young man never lost a night's sleep. He was padding his conscience with all manner of sophistries and make-believes; he would even kneel down to his nightly prayer, and perhaps write pious letters home, while all the time he was in the daily practice of deliberate fraud; not only

stealing, but lying too; the devil making him an easy dupe.

And, thus far, the way of the transgressor seemed soft and smooth. He enjoyed life thoroughly. He could sing and be merry with his friends, and feel no inward pang as he bowed his head in public prayer, or even sat down at the table of the Lord. But now the crisis has come; he is found out: and to his amazement there is a resurrection of moral sensibility he never dreamed of. Conscience awakes from its sleep; it bites, and gnaws, and stings; character and self-respect are gone; and "his iniquities take such hold upon him, he is not able to look up." He shuns the sight of his friends; every thought of home pierces him with agony; he wishes he were dead, yet shudders at the thought of it. He would give all the world to be able to wipe out the past, but it cannot be: so he drags along a wretched existence, muttering as he goes, "The way of transgressors is hard!"

You would not wonder at me speaking so plainly if you knew how many actual cases I have now before my eye; one of them, but a few years ago, with as fair a character and as good prospects as any of you, and to-day in yonder gaol, wincing under the pangs of hopeless remorse!

I do not know that I should have addressed you as I have done this evening, had I not received letters from some of you which suggested this subject. Oh, it would hardly be supposed that in this quiet, orderly, devout company, there were such cases of moral shipwreck, and fierce inward conflict, as are actually now present. The breast of some of you—a battle-field between God and the devil; grace and lust striving for the victory; hope and despair by turns seeming to prevail.

I have but a poor dim guess of the struggle through which you are passing, but He, who can make you more than conquerors, knows all.

Gird up your loins then like men, and trample the adder under your feet. There is grace enough in Him to make the feeblest of you victor over all the wiles of hell. "Surely in vain is the snare set in the sight of any bird"; will you be more foolish than birds, and put your foot in the snares which I have now exposed to your view? I want to take your hand, my young erring brother, and lead you out of "the way of transgressors," into the safe and blessed path of righteousness. Come along, it is not too late. Christ bids me say to you in His name, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." His salvation would be worth nothing, if it could not meet your case. I bring you the offer of pardon for the past, comfort for the present, strength for the future. The Gospel of the loving Jesus is just the religion for you, for it brings mercy for the most guilty, and hope for the most despairing. If there is genuine repentance on your side, there is genuine forgiveness on God's.

Let this be the hour of your final and ever-to-be-remembered decision. From the spot where you are now seated let the solemn vow go up to Heaven, "Lord, I surrender myself to Thee. I choose Thee for my God, and henceforth will seek my happiness in Thee alone." Never, never whilst you live, will you regret such a resolve; and when, at last, in long and mournful procession, the dissipated, and licentious, and fraudulent, and unbelieving, are marching down to the blackness of eternal despair, your upward glowing path shall be "like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day!"

THE SHIPWRECK AT EZION-GEBER.

"Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not: for the ships were broken at Ezion-Geber."

1 KINGS xxii. 48.

XIV.

THE SHIPWRECK AT EZION-GEBER.

FRIGHTFUL DISASTER IN THE GULF OF AKABAH—IMMENSE DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY—FURIOUS GALE AT EZION-GEBER—HIS MAJESTY'S FLEET WRECKED.

HAD the art of printing existed, and had daily newspapers been issued in Palestine nine hundred years before Christ, such a notice as the above might probably have appeared one morning, creating universal panic and excitement. It is very little that we know of the terrible catastrophe, but it is not recorded without a purpose: and my aim at present is to bring out the lesson intended.

Attention, then, to three things:—first, the Disaster itself; secondly, the Cause of it; and thirdly, the Instruction we are to draw from it:—

1. Let me tell you of this lamentable *disaster* to King Jehoshaphat's shipping.

We have all recently had our thoughts turned toward the Red Sea and the shores of Egypt and Arabia. Most of you have sufficient geographical knowledge to be aware that the Red Sea is a long and comparatively narrow sheet of water, running in a north-westerly direction from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. Its extreme length, from the Strait of Babel Mandeb to the Isthmus of Suez, is over 1,400 miles, but at the northern end it divides into two arms somewhat like the letter Y, which enclose between

them the peninsula of Mount Sinai. The left, or western arm, and the larger of the two, is that with which we are best acquainted, and is called the Gulf of Suez; the right arm runs in a north-easterly direction for upwards of 100 miles, and is known as the Gulf of Akabah.

At the head of this latter gulf is the site of the ancient Ezion-Geber, a city of Arabia, three times referred to in the Old Testament. Shall I tell you what those three occasions were?

In the first place, it is mentioned as one of the halting-places of the people of Israel, in their forty years' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Numbers xxxiii. 35: "And they departed from Ebronah, and encamped at Ezion-Geber, and they removed from Ezion-Geber, and pitched in the wilderness of Zin."

The next allusion is in the history of King Solomon. When he was in the zenith of his prosperity and power, he established at this place great ship-building yards, for carrying on a commercial traffic with India.

There was little wood in that region, but Hiram, the King of Tyre, who was very friendly to Solomon, sent him enormous supplies of timber from the forests of Lebanon, the timber being floated down on the Mediterranean Sea, along the western coast of Palestine, and then transported across country to the head of the Gulf of Akabah.

Here are the words of the historian, in this First Book of Kings ix. 26: "And King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon."

The third and last mention of the spot is in our text. I suppose that Jehoshaphat wanted to emulate his illustrious sire, and to increase the wealth of his dominions by importing the treasures of the east. It is not easy to determine the locality of the land of Ophir. No less than sixteen different countries have been suggested as the spot. It seems to me that by far the strongest weight of evidence is in favour of the East Indies, though the precise district cannot now be ascertained. If you bear in mind where those ships were launched, and the impossibility, in those days, when there was no Suez Canal, of their reaching any port on the Mediterranean without doubling the Cape of Good Hope—a feat which it is not likely even the Phœnicians ever accomplished—you will be satisfied that Ophir could not be anywhere in the west of Asia, or on the continent of Europe; and as the Hebrew ships in Solomon's time, according to the inspired narrative, took three years for the return voyage, it could hardly be anywhere in Arabia, or on the eastern coast of Africa.

Moreover, the variety of articles which these vessels brought with them indicates pretty clearly the region with which they trafficked: for "once in three years"—so we are informed—"came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks." For such voyages over the Indian Ocean large and powerful vessels were required; and Jehoshaphat was resolved that he would have a fleet of ships adapted for the trade.

Our text tells us that he "made ships of Tharshish," —some read the Hebrew, "ten ships of Tharshish." Now this needs a word of explanation. The locality of Tharshish, like that of Ophir, is unknown. That there was a place of this name on the Mediterranean, probably on the east coast of Spain, cannot be doubted; and thither it was, you remember, that Jonah wished to flee.

But morally certain it is, as I have said, that the vessels built and launched at Ezion-Geber never sailed to those regions. It is, of course, possible that in the same part of the world where Ophir was situated, there was a city called Tharshish. But it is not necessary even to suppose this.

Let me explain: The ancient Phœnicians were accustomed to distinguish two classes of ships—those for the home traffic, along the comparatively quiet shores of Tyre and Sidon, and those for the distant traffic, say Tharshish, on the Spanish Peninsula, probably as far as they ever ventured to go. The former were called "ships of Tyre," and were usually very light, and gay, and luxurious in their fittings. Ezekiel describes them as made of cypress wood, with masts of cedar, and oars of oak, and benches of ivory, and sails of fine linen, and bunting of blue and purple and scarlet.

The latter class of vessels were of much larger tonnage and robuster build, and were called "ships of Tharshish."

What is meant in our text, then, is that Jehoshaphat made a fleet of great and powerful vessels, which were styled "ships of Tharshish"; just in the same way as in our own country an "East Indiaman" is a general name given to a certain class of ships, though some of them are never intended to go to India at all.*

Now, to make the picture more complete, and the text more real, I have to draw your attention to another point. Every one knows that the left or western arm of the Red Sea is, as a whole, comparatively shallow.

The banks are flat, and the channel is to some extent filled up by the sand which has been washed in by the strong tides, or drifted in by the winds.

* See 2 Chron. xx. 36, probably transcriber's mistake, as in next chapter, verse 2, "Israel," for "Judah."

The eastern arm, or Gulf of Akabah, is much deeper; indeed, it is a narrow deep ravine, with steep and rocky sides—the valley of which it forms part stretching far away to the north, till where it holds in its trough the waters of the Dead Sea. Down this mountain gorge the northerly winds sweep at times with fierce violence, bringing danger to any of the few ships that are sailing in the gulf, or anchored at the head of it beside "Ezion-Geber."

This name significantly means "the giant's backbone," and points plainly to a reef of dangerous rocks in the vicinity.

The mountains here are bare, precipitous, and jagged, and in some places rise two thousand feet perpendicularly from the shore.

Well, such was the spot where Jehoshaphat established large ship-building yards, and from which, eighty or a hundred years before, Solomon had sent out a well-manned navy to bring back to the land of Israel the far-famed treasures of India.

There has been a busy time of it at Ezion-Geber. Had you been there you would have been deafened by the noise of planes, and saws, and hammers, all busy from morn to night, in fitting out the best fleet of vessels ever launched upon the Red Sea.

At length the work is done. Ten goodly ships lie safe at anchor in the quiet harbour of Ezion-Geber. I see them trim and ready for the distant voyage, with gay bunting flying from prow to stern.

The evening is calm and still, and all is pleasing anticipation, for to-morrow morning the anchors are to be lifted, and the fleet is to set out for the land of Ophir.

But during the night what a change! The clouds begin

to hasten across the starless sky; the wind moans strangely, as though in agony, and every moment grows more gusty and fierce; the dark, deep waters of Akabah are lashed into foam; and now the lightning gleams, and the artillery of heaven booms amid the echoing hills with terrific roar; the elemental war waxes wilder still, till at last, down through the mountain gorge sweeps the mad hurricane with resistless might, shattering the ships of Jehoshaphat in pieces, and leaving for the grey morning to look upon only pitiful wreckage all along the shore.

"Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold; but they went not, for the ships were broken at Ezion-Geber."

Now, secondly, I wish to tell you *the cause* of this disaster. It was a judgment from Heaven. I would not say this if the Bible did not tell me so. Some people are too ready, as though they were in the secret counsels of the Most High, to say of such and such a calamity, "Oh, it is a judgment from Heaven, and is a punishment for some special sin." For example, there was a tower in Jerusalem that lay considerably off the perpendicular: it is three times referred to in the Book of Nehemiah as the "great tower which lieth (or leaneth) out," and was, I doubt not, the same to which the name of "Tower of Siloam" was given. Well, when men build "leaning towers," they must not be greatly surprised if they should tumble down. I remember feeling very nervous about ascending the famous leaning tower of Pisa, which is 179 feet high, and at its upper part no less than 13 feet out of the perpendicular.

One day the tower of Siloam fell to the ground with a crash, and eighteen corpses were afterwards dug out of the ruin. Immediately there were stupid people who said that these unfortunate persons must have been the

"greatest sinners in Jerusalem," or this accident would not have occurred to them.

But it is totally different in the case before us. We read in 2 Chron. xx. 37, that a faithful prophet of the Lord came to King Jehoshaphat, and plainly told him what was the cause of the terrible disaster to his shipping. "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works."

Jehoshaphat, remember, was a good man—a man of distinguished piety. He was not only a devout worshipper of Jehovah, but a wise and energetic sovereign. His reign of twenty-five years was powerful and prosperous. We read that he "built in Judah castles (or palaces) and cities of stone, and he had much business in the cities of Judah." He was an enterprising monarch, and did what he could to develop the resources of the country. There was nothing to find fault with in his trading project with the East Indies; there was no sin in his establishing a powerful mercantile marine. Where his grand mistake, his sin, lay, was in associating himself with the enemies of God. This was the signal error of his life.

On three successive occasions he was guilty of committing it. Here is the record of the first occasion: "Now, Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab." Ahab, the King of Israel, was a wicked man, and Jehoshaphat should have had nothing to do with him. The alliance nearly cost him his life; and was faithfully rebuked by Jehu in these words:—"Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord."

At a later period he joined in a naval and mercantile expedition with Ahaziah, the godless son and successor

of Ahab—this being the occasion to which our text refers.

And again, subsequently to this, he involved himself in an alliance with Ahab's second son, when he came to the throne.

So that it seems to have been the weakness of his character, his besetting sin, to compromise his religious principle, and associate with men who had no fear of God before their eyes.

If Jehoshaphat had been an openly wicked man, or a mere man of the world, probably this great shipping disaster would not have occurred: but God would not allow one of His own servants to prosper in such an undertaking.

There is a little obscurity, because apparent contradiction, in the two narratives, here and in Chronicles, but I think the correct solution is this. On the first proposal that Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah should go partners in the expedition to Ophir, the former would not consent; his conscience would not allow him; he felt it would be wrong, and he said "no"; but afterwards he overcame his scruples, and poohpoohed the objections; so the big scheme was concocted, and the fleet built.

But these fine ships *never sailed*. They never left the Gulf of Akabah. The Lord frowned upon the undertaking, and sent a storm that shattered them in pieces. "For the ships were broken at Ezion-geber."

So much for the cause of the disaster. There is yet one thing more to consider.

Thirdly, the *lesson* which it teaches. It is a lesson for everyone here. Do not choose your associates amongst those who fear not the Lord.

It is never safe to go in the same boat with the wicked. Worldly friendships and alliances, formed for selfish ends, will never in the long run be profitable. It is an ancient proverb, but it is as true to-day as when Solomon wrote it: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

The rule which the psalmist David laid down was a good one for all of us: "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts." Whether the alliance proposed is social, matrimonial, or commercial, it is a sound principle to go upon, to shun those who do not fear God. Many a marriage has been productive of anything but happiness, because there was this "unequal yoking." For all the bright sunshine of that nuptial day, and the smiles and kisses and benedictions which amid the orange blossom were showered upon the bride, the union turned out a very sad one, because one of the parties was a godless worldling.

The ill-matched fleet was hardly launched when disaster came, and the very house of God was made an "Ezion-geber."

The lesson of my text bears, too, upon your social connections. It is always safest to keep under Christian influences. A man is rarely better than the company he keeps. Jehoshaphat may hope to bring Ahaziah up to his own level; but Ahaziah is much more likely to bring Jehoshaphat down.

Ungodliness is infectious: better strengthen what is good in you than put it in peril. Never make a friend of one who would destroy your faith; "go not in the way of evil men."

True sympathy of hearts is the golden bond of friendship.

Lastly, the lesson of the text bears also, and with peculiar point, upon all business alliances. Perfectly true, men do

not always in this matter have their choice. Circumstances may occur to make the partnership of Messrs. Smith and Brown a necessity, though Smith is a Christian and Brown an infidel. Of such a case I will not judge; but we all know that, as a rule, men are very much at liberty to choose their own business connections: and the less Jehoshaphat's sailors have to do with Ahaziah's, the better. You will do well even to sacrifice a measure of financial interest and worldly prospect rather than be associated in business with a man who is out of all sympathy with you in religion.

I believe that the King of Judah's error was all the more serious and offensive to God because the alliance which he formed was with one whose own conscience must have convicted him.

Ahaziah was not a heathen monarch. As King of Israel he was not unacquainted with the true religion. Had the co-partnership been with an ignorant idolater, it would not have been so bad, and perhaps the disaster would not have occurred. That historic ship in which Jonah took a passage from Joppa to Tarshish would not have encountered the terrific gale that nearly sent it to the bottom, had its noted passenger been a blinded pagan.

Now there is an important principle here. You would receive less harm from association in business with an unbaptized Hottentot, or a Parsee, or a Mahommedan, than with a cynical Christian hypocrite.

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the people of God at Corinth, makes this point very clear. In what we call "his first Epistle"—(though he must have written an earlier letter, which has not been preserved)—he says that he had written to them in a former Epistle to dissociate themselves from fornicators and all kinds of wicked men. But this instruction had been misunderstood.

So he writes more explicitly to say that he does not mean them to dissociate themselves altogether from the ungodly "of this world," for "then they must needs go out of the world." "But," he adds, "what I mean is this, that if any man that is called a *brother*, that is, a professing believer, a member of the church—if such a one be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with him you are to have nothing to do, no, not even to sit down and eat with him. Note that man, and have no fellowship with him, that he may be ashamed."

It is time to bring my address to a close. But it will not be in vain that I have called your attention to this remarkable text if you learn from it that in all your enterprises, even your worldly business and commercial undertakings, you should seek the blessing of Heaven, that blessing which is promised only to those who honour the Lord.

SEPARATED: AND NO TEARS AT THE PARTING.

"*Ahab went one way by himself: and Obadiah went another way by himself.*"—1 KINGS xviii. 6.

XV.

SEPARATED: AND NO TEARS AT THE PARTING.

THEY separated; and I am sure there were no tears shed on either side at the parting. Never were two men more utterly unlike. Never were associates more ill-matched. How they managed for some time to pull together, I cannot imagine. The one, a poor, irresolute, cowardly weakling, a gross idolater, a vile debauchee; the other, a firm, devoted, and fearless worshipper of the true God: it is surprising that such a friendship could have lasted a single day. Yet there has been many an instance in history of the good and bad starting life together, and going so far in company on the journey, till a point was reached where the companionship must be broken, the fellowship must end. From that point their paths diverged; the one went one way by himself, and the other went another way by himself. I am not referring to providential events which sometimes occur to alter a young man's course, to sever him from his choicest friends, and give a new and unexpected turn to his whole career, but rather to elements of character—moral forces, which split up the closest boon companionships, and send off in opposite directions those who had hitherto run on parallel rails together.

another way

As I was reading the chapter the other day, this 6th verse arrested me. I paused, and said within myself, "How suggestive! How true a picture of what is ever

and anon happening amongst ourselves! How many an Ahab and Obadiah have I myself seen, who started on life's journey together, with equal advantages, equal dangers, equal hopes, but at a certain point parted company for ever: the one turning to the left, to pursue a career of self-indulgence, indolence, failure, disgrace, remorse, death—the other turning to the right, a career of duty, self-denial, honour, success, victory!"

There is a point in life where the parallel rails diverge, and—the little flange once passed—the subsequent course may be held determined. Many of you are already beyond it (some pressing along, with Obadiah, on the safe and heavenward line; and perhaps a few hurrying, with Ahab, on the path to eternal ruin); but I am much deceived if there are not a goodly number here who have not yet come quite up to the decisive point; and it is to them that I would specially address myself, and ask them whether they will follow the leading of Ahab or Obadiah?

We are here taken into the court of one of the silliest and vilest monarchs that ever occupied a throne. The career of Ahab shows us to what a depth of moral degradation a man may sink,—although not altogether devoid of a conscience and of some better impulses—who is unfortunate enough to have a base, unprincipled woman for his wife. A more objectionable partner, I should say, man never had. Ahab was fool enough to give his hand to a lady who is, without question, the vilest female character in all sacred history. She was a clever, cunning woman, and I can believe had a good deal of show and style about her; and the young prince, caught by the glitter, took a step that proved his ruin.

When a man is not possessed of much brains himself, he not unfrequently makes up for it by wedding a woman who

has more than her own share. I am not going to say anything against this, for two fools are worse than one any day; but this woman was as wicked and unscrupulous as she was shrewd and designing; and she soon got her husband into a peck of troubles. Do not imagine that I am unjustly maligning her; for here is what we are told in the twenty-first chapter:—"There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, *whom Jezebel, his wife, stirred up*."

Solomon says, "He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing;" he seems to have thought so, for he had seven hundred wives himself; but the truth of his proverb depends upon the character of the woman that is wed. When a man marries a Jezebel, it is all up with him.

But, for the honour of the sex let it be said, there is but one Jezebel in the Bible, whilst there are Sarahs, and Rebekahs, Hannahs, and Marys, and Priscillas, in abundance.

I know well that there is little use of giving young men advice on *this* point; and yet, with the wretched career of this ill-matched couple before us, I am bound to warn you against the folly of being allured, rather by outward glitter, and show, and beauty, than by sterling moral worth.

If Ahab had not made such a stupid and atrocious matrimonial blunder, he might have turned out a better man than he did. As it is, his name is an ugly blot upon the page of Scripture. He had no decision of character, no moral backbone.

Miss Martineau tells a curious story of Lord Brougham, who, though a man of remarkable genius, has left no impression on his country at all commensurate with his

talents; and this, undoubtedly, because of a want of fixedness of purpose which characterised him all through life. It was whilst he was residing at his favourite château in Cannes, that the earliest photographic process was invented; and an accomplished artist proposed to take a view of the château, with Brougham and a distinguished party of guests occupying a prominent position in the balcony. It was necessary, of course, that each of them should, for six or eight seconds, remain absolutely motionless; and his lordship emphatically promised that he would not stir. But even eight seconds was too long for his restless nature; the consequence was, that when the picture was developed, there was found in the centre of the group only a blur where the figure of Lord Brougham should be—and that blur remains to this day.

Ah! how many a young man, through restlessness and instability of character, has left only a blur upon the page of human history!

But—to go on with my story. Jezebel, who came of a heathen stock, and was a born idolater, detested the true religion, and vowed to make a clean sweep of all the prophets of the Lord. Now it so happened, that the principal person or prime minister in the court of King Ahab was a devout and God-fearing man; and how he managed to get and to retain that high position, is a question worth considering. I have noticed that, let a man be ever so immoral and irreligious himself, he likes to have his affairs managed by one who "fears the Lord." You may tell me, if you please, that some of the worst scoundrels that ever breathed were members of the Christian Church—that does not shake me from my position, that, taken all in all, there are fifty chances to one that a pious, God-fearing man will manage a business better than a profligate or an Atheist.

Here is a gentleman who has a large and lucrative business in the city. He avows himself a "sceptic," which is just a genteel name for an infidel. Never enters a church. Never reads the Bible. Never bows the knee to God. Well, this man has a responsible position in his office vacant. He advertises for a young man qualified to undertake it. As a matter of course, there are over a hundred applications, as there always are for any good berth that is empty. After tossing fifty or sixty of these letters into the waste paper basket, he carefully weeds the rest, and eventually fixes on two that seem the most likely and promising. The applicants are written to, and invited to call. Both eligible and intelligent-looking young men. From private interview it appears that one of them comes from a Christian home, is a member of the Church, and is very decided in his religious character; whilst the other is an avowed atheist, and scoffs at the Bible; does it take two minutes to guess which of these candidates will be selected?

Ah! well do even the godless know, that the man who fears the Lord is the man that is worthy of confidence and trust.

Well, you will please notice what is said in the 3rd verse: "And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly." Now I say to you, young men, that it has often been a grand, though unintended testimony to Christianity, that even those who have themselves hated and denied it have felt that they could sleep more soundly when they had for their confidential servant or clerk a man who was a sincere disciple of Jesus.

Oh, but, you say, no doubt Obadiah kept his principles in his pocket, and acted just like the rest of the idolaters at the royal court. Nothing of the kind. He was as

firm and conscientious as Ahab was fickle and irresolute. Many a man in his position would have sacrificed his convictions. On the plea that "in Rome you must do as Rome does," he would have laid his religion to one side, and—if not openly joining with the royal pair in their idolatrous practices—would at all events have "sailed as close to the wind as possible."

Obadiah was not a man of that sort. He stuck to his principles. Neither threats nor flattery moved him. When he saw the wretch of a queen hounding out the prophets of Jehovah, he used the influence which his position afforded him to throw the shield of protection over them; and at the risk of his own life stowed away a hundred of them in caves, and supplied them with food during a time of exceptional danger.

The king knew perfectly well what Obadiah's principles were. But he did not value him the less on that account. On the contrary, Obadiah's influence at court, like Daniel's at the court of Babylon, became greater every day.

Of this, we have a striking proof in the chapter before us. A terrible famine had been devastating Samaria. For three years there had been no rain on the land. Every fountain and brook was dry. There was scarcely a blade of grass to be seen; and whilst the people were still able to subsist on the corn that had been stored up, the cattle and horses were perishing. Ahab saw that matters had reached a terrible crisis, and that if something were not done at once, there would not be a live beast left in the land. Samaria, as you know, was a belt of country lying from east to west, in the centre of Palestine; from Petræa on the one side, to the Mediterranean on the other. The capital was as nearly as possible in the centre. What the king proposed was this; that two parties of explorers should be formed, one

of which would go eastward, and the other westward, and carefully examine whether any remnants of herbage still existed in the beds of what were springs and brooks, that so something might be done to save the cattle.

It was a matter of national importance. So the king headed the one band himself, and for the other Obadiah, as the most reliable man, was selected.

It is just at this point that our text finds them. An eventful moment it afterwards turned out to be. I see them mounted and ready to start. The horses' heads are turned in opposite ways. There is a wave of the hand on either side, and a final adieu, and off they gallop, each to enter on a new chapter of his own strange history, but both never to meet again on the same terms on which they parted. "Ahab went one way by himself: and Obadiah went another way by himself."

I shall not pursue the story any further at present; the text has sufficient allegorical suggestiveness to awaken many a solemn thought within you. I shall mention but three.

And first, there are, after all, but *two ways*; you must choose the one or the other. You must follow Ahab, or you must go with Obadiah. The snare into which large numbers of young men fall is the attempt at compromise. They shrink from the unblushing wickedness of the one, but do not care to commit themselves to the earnest piety of the other. I wish to tell you to-night that every such case of indecision is a gain to the devil's side. In loud and ringing tones our Divine Lord exclaims, "No man can serve two masters; he that is not with me is against me." Even the old Latins had a proverb, "*Duos qui sequitur lepores, neutrum capit;*" *i.e.*, "He who follows two hares will catch neither." Don't imagine for a moment that you are standing between right and wrong, like the embarrassed

ass in Æsop's fable, between two equal bundles of hay, as though the bias towards each side were equal. We all incline to the evil rather than the good. Ahab will always have more to allure than Obadiah. I have seen a little boy fishing with an unbaited hook, but I never noticed that he caught any fish; the devil is far too clever an angler to do that. If a strong moral force does not govern the will, it is not difficult to tell which side will be chosen.

The words which Fowell Buxton wrote near the close of his life, are well worthy of being pondered by each of you:—"The longer I live, the more I am certain, that the great difference between men is energy, invincible determination—a purpose once fixed, and then death or victory!" "This quality," added he, "will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talent, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged creature a man without it." When Constantine was elected emperor, he was resolved to have around him only men on whom he could place the most absolute reliance; and he issued an edict—requiring of all the Christians who held office that they should renounce their religion, or resign. A few basely abjured their principles, whilst the others threw up their office. The latter he immediately reinstated with honour; the former he dismissed from his court, saying, "You who can desert or deny your Divine Master, are not likely to be faithful to me, and are unworthy of my confidence." When Mr. Biddle, who was a famous banker in New York, demanded that his clerks should perform some pressing extra work upon the Lord's Day, one of them replied, that his conscience would not permit him to work on the Sabbath. "Conscience, fiddlesticks!" was the rejoinder, "then you must give up your place to one who will; that's all."

The young man left. Did the irreligious banker in his heart esteem the youth the less for this? Hear the sequel of the story. It was not long after this that Mr. Biddle was applied to by a friend, who wished to secure a thoroughly trustworthy young man, for a situation of great responsibility. He instantly recommended the very young man he had dismissed; saying, "He is just the man for you; he follows the bidding of conscience."

Now I say, that young fellow was worth fifty of a looser stamp, who would snap their fingers at religious principle, and think only of the worldly gain.

Among the hundreds of young men who are here, I see a few smooth-cheeked little chaps who are scarcely that length yet, and I say to you with burning earnestness, Do, my dear boys, put down your feet firmly on the line of principle, and refuse to yield a hair-breadth to the tempter. Every stern resistance you offer to temptation is so much moral momentum gained; and though you should live for fifty years, you will never cease to bless the day when, with God's help, you followed in the steps of Obadiah, who declared, "I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth."

Secondly, *choose for your associates those with whom you would wish to company all through life.* Try to look below the surface and read the character; and do not give your friendship to anyone whom, in your deepest soul, you do not respect. Many young men, through a false amiability or good nature, strike up an intimacy with Tom, Dick, or Harry, without ever considering what manner of men they be. Even some who are themselves pure and honourable accept the society of lads whose hands they should not touch even with gloves on. Don't forget what the old Book says, that even "the companion of fools shall be destroyed." A companion means a copy; for, consciously

or unconsciously, you are certain to imitate something in the character of your associates. Begin with your friend as you mean to go on, and let him know very early in your acquaintanceship that you are not made of putty, but have principles, and mean to stick to them.

As a rule, youth is too unsuspicious; and in the matter of friendships is often as foolish as the little babe, that will suck a knife as readily as its mother's finger. It was a good maxim of Lord Collingwood, "Better be alone, than in mean company." If you are to have a chum or two, let them be men from whom you will learn only what is good. Certainly, do not choose for your companion one who is morally or intellectually beneath your own level. It was said of John Sterling, you could not come in contact with him, without being, in a measure, ennobled and benefited. That is the right sort of man to select for a friend. It was an excellent advice which a father gave his son, and I trust you will act upon it—"Make companions of few, be intimate with one, deal justly with all, speak evil of none."

Lastly: *Should your most intimate associate prove to be of evil principles, part company with him at once.* Better offend your acquaintance than lose your soul. Pull up the instant you find you are off the road, and take the shortest way back you can find. When the shoe of conscience begins to pinch, it is about time we turn our steps into another path. Ahabs and Obadiahs cannot remain long in partnership, and the sooner that partnership be dissolved the better. But it is often just as hard to throw off a bad companion as it is to find a good one. Burs will stick to your clothes, while violets drop out of your button-holes. A friend tells me of a bulldog of his, that, if he bites at anything, never lets it go again, and there is only one way of getting it out of his mouth—by cutting off his head.

I have known unprincipled fellows, from whose clutches it was nearly as difficult for the young and virtuous to make escape. If the call of duty places you for a time, as it did Obadiah, in the midst of bad company, God is able to protect you from the moral taint, as he kept Daniel pure in the midst of Babylon; but not a moment longer than is needful should you tarry in the place of danger, for St. Paul truly says, "Be not deceived; evil company doth corrupt good manners." (Revised version.)

I look over this large—this dying, but immortal auditory, and find myself asking, "How many Ahabs?—and how many Obadiahs?" I divide you into these two groups, one group going one way, and the other another. Oh, which way are your faces turned—towards a joyless hell, or a glorious heaven? Is it to be the "pleasures of sin for a season," or the everlasting festival, and the amaranthine crown? Are you to "sell yourselves to work wickedness," or are you to "fear God, and keep His commandments"? Are you to give the bridle to your passions, and gallop off at the devil's bidding, till, like Ahab, you tremble at the thought of God, and at the sight of His minister can only cry, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"—or are you to make Jehovah your God, give your strength to His service, and look for eternal life to the merits of His Son? Ah! some of you have been warned and entreated till Sinai has no more thunders to sound, and Calvary no more tenderness to plead.

To-night I press for a decision. Oh! drop your sins, and grasp the Saviour, saying, "This God is my God for ever and ever: He will be my guide even unto death." Amen.

HALF-HEARTED; AND THEREFORE A FAILURE.

"*And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.*"—2 CHRON. XXV. 2.

XVI.

HALF-HEARTED; AND THEREFORE A FAILURE.

THIS man was a true type of large numbers of young Englishmen in our own day, who, with many excellent principles and good points of character, are only half-hearted in religion.

Amaziah is a Scriptural person very little studied. Though there is much to be learnt from the brief record of his life, few people seem to have noticed it. I never met with a sermon upon it. I suppose many persons, if you asked them, could not tell you who Amaziah was.

Nor is it difficult to explain this. Some of those ancient Jewish kings were conspicuous for their piety, and some were notorious for their daring wickedness. This man was neither the one nor the other. We are told, in the Second Book of Kings, that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not like his father (or ancestor) David." In his life and character, there was a mingling of the good and the evil. But I imagine that on this account he was only the truer type of the vast majority of men.

Davids and Josiahs, alas! are few and far between; so also, happily, are Ahabs and Manassehs; but Amaziahs everywhere abound.

We shall make this man our study for a little, and, I hope, shall carry away some useful lessons.

There are three sources from which we obtain information about him; I shall avail myself of them all. There is, first, the record in the Second Book of Kings; then there is the passage before us; and lastly, there is an interesting chapter in Josephus's "Antiquities of the Jews;" which, though of course it has not the authority of Scripture, is generally held to be reliable.

Amaziah was twenty-five years of age when he succeeded to the throne. As a boy he had been conscientious and well-behaved. Josephus says, "He was exceeding careful of doing what was right, and this when he was very young." From the express mention of his mother's name, both here and in the Book of Kings, I fancy she was a good and pious woman; and that her faithful training had much to do with the early promise he gave of a useful and honourable career. Many a time, I dare say, Jehoaddan (for such was her name) would take her son aside, and in fervent prayer commend him to the God of his fathers, and tell him of the heroic deeds of some of his saintly ancestors, and point out to him the responsibilities which, in future years, would devolve upon him. Oh, who can estimate the influence of a godly mother! Do not many of you owe more than words can ever express to the wise and gentle rule of her who gave you birth? What tender and hallowed associations cluster round the home of your early childhood! John Wesley wrote:—"I remember that, when I first understood what death was, and began to think of it, the most fearful thought it induced was that of losing my mother; it seemed to me more than I could bear, and I used to hope that I might die before her."

Ah! there is no velvet so soft as a mother's lap, no star

so lovely as her smile, no music so melodious as her voice, no rose so fragrant as the memory of her love!

The first thing that Amaziah did when he was settled on the throne was to avenge the murder of his father Joash. A cruel conspiracy had been framed by the servants of the palace, and they had slain the king upon his bed. His son could not rest until these miscreants had been brought to justice. If he had carried out the vindictive practices of his own time, he would have destroyed their families too; but he called to mind an enactment in the law of Moses, to the effect that children should not be made to suffer for the sins of their fathers, and he spared them alive.

Now this showed that he was not unfamiliar with his Bible, and that he was anxious to be merciful as well as just. Had he not been acquainted with the Mosaic law, and had he not had some elements of goodness in his heart, he would, no doubt, have swept off the face of the earth, root and branch, the whole families of those who had taken his father's life

The great exploit of his reign was a military compaign against the Edomites. The country of Edom bordered on Palestine, and in the days of King Jehoshaphat was subject to Judah: but for some time the people had successfully revolted, and Amaziah was seized with the ambition to reduce them to obedience again, and so to extend the glory of his kingdom.

There does not appear to have been any necessity for this war. Like most wars, it sprang out of greed and the lust for power. No doubt Amaziah would find some pretext for it: kings and governments always manage this.

But the simple fact was, he wished to be a bigger man, and to have a wider empire; so he set to work to gather a magnificent army with which to invade and capture the land of Edom. "Annexation" is the word. We know a little about it in our own time. If a certain region of the world, desirable for political or commercial reasons, is weak and ill-governed, and a sort of "no-man's-land," we feel it our duty to "annex" it, which, in some instances, is neither less nor more than a piece of national larceny. Well, Amaziah, having taken this job in hand, resolved he would make it a success; so, in addition to his own army, consisting of 300,000 chosen men, he hired from his neighbour Joash, the king of Israel, 100,000 soldiers, all "mighty men of valour."

For this he agreed to pay a hundred talents of silver. However, when the expedition was all prepared, and just as he was setting out for the field of battle, a prophet came to him, and in the name of God ordered him at once to dismiss those soldiers he had hired from the king of Israel: adding that the Lord's favour was not with them, and that they would be a source rather of weakness than of strength. Amaziah was greatly put about by this. He was most unwilling to send these stalwart men about their business, and yet he feared to disobey the prophet. Moreover, he had already paid down a big sum for the hire of them, and that money he could not recover. "What shall we do," said he, "for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?" And the prophet answered, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this."

It was a trial of the king's principle and faith in God. And how did he act? What decision did he come to? He did the thing that was right. "Let the money go," he said; "we shall dispense with these Israelites, and look

to God for help." So he sent the men back to their own country.

But they were much offended at being thus treated. They took it as an insult offered to them, and in passing homewards through the land of Judah, they took occasion to wreak their vengeance on the people, and wrought great mischief among them.

Having got rid of these men, Amaziah led forth his army against the Edomites, gaining a signal victory over them in the valley of Salt, where ten thousand were left dead upon the field. Other ten thousand he took as prisoners, and bringing them to the top of the steep cliffs of that rocky region, threw them over headlong, so that they were dashed in pieces.

His very success, however, proved in the long run to be his ruin. Elated with the splendid victory he had achieved, he forsook the God of his fathers. He was foolish enough to take back into his own country some of the idol gods of Edom, and wicked enough to set them up as objects of worship. Yielding himself to degrading superstition, he actually bowed himself down before these heathen deities, and burned incense unto them. On this, a prophet came to him, and rebuked him for his gross idolatry; but this only provoked the king to rage, who bid the prophet hold his peace, and threatened to smite him if he interfered. The man of God replied that he would indeed hold his peace, but warned the king that he had incurred the wrath of the Most High, and that his destruction was not far off.

The prediction was fulfilled, and that in a remarkable and tragic manner. Amaziah, puffed up with pride, seems to have fairly lost his head. His great victory over the Edomites gave him a thirst for further conquest. So, in a vein of insolence, he sent a challenge to the King of

Israel to come and try their strength in battle. Had it been a personal duel he proposed, the case would not have been so bad; but, unfortunately, the whims of kings involve the sufferings of the innocent; and too often thousands of lives have been sacrificed to one man's capricious humour. King Joash seems to have been a bit of a wit or a wag: for he sent him back a smart and pungent reply, which must have stung Amaziah to the quick. Many a wholesome truth old Æsop told with emphasis by his witty fables; and by the quaint little story we were reading to-night, Joash read his royal brother a lesson he was in need of. He compares himself to a stately cedar of Lebanon, and Amaziah to a sorry contemptible thistle: intimating that he scorned as much to have anything to do with him, as a cedar would to affiance his daughter to a weed. He made the pill even more bitter to swallow, by adding, that a wild beast came and trod down the thistle; the import of which it would not be difficult for the King of Judah to understand.

Josephus tells us, that, on reading this letter, Amaziah was more determined than ever to fight, and hastened to bring his army to the field; but that, as soon as his men were drawn up in battle array, a strange unaccountable panic seized them, so that they all fled in every direction, and left their king alone, who was immediately taken prisoner by the enemy. Moreover, to add to his humiliation, Joash threatened to kill him, unless he would persuade the people of Jerusalem, his own capital, to open their gates to the conqueror. This Amaziah did; but, not content therewith, Joash broke down a part of the ancient wall, and drove his chariot through the breach, leading his royal prisoner captive behind him; and not till he had rifled the king's palace, and taken away all the costly treasures of the temple, did he set him at liberty, and return to Samaria.

The end of Amaziah was a sad one. Betrayed by his own friends, who made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, he fled to the city of Lachish, but they sent after him, and slew him there. "This," adds Josephus, "was the end of the life of Amaziah, because of his innovations in religion, and his contempt of God."

I daresay it has occurred to you, as I have been recounting the story, that there was much more of what was bad than of what was good in the life of this man; and you may wonder that it is said of him in our text, that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord."

Something must be allowed, of course, for the times in which he lived, and for the contrast with kings greatly worse than himself; but there were not wanting certain good elements about him; and had he not given way to a haughty temper and ambitious pride, his career might have been a useful and a happy one. He was acquainted with the Scriptures, and paid respect to the ordinances of religion; he had the desire to live a virtuous and godly life; but the secret of his failure was, that his heart was not right with God. His goodness was superficial, and therefore artificial; it was not the outcome of a regenerate nature.

Well, there may be nothing very novel, nothing exciting nor entertaining, in the truth I am bringing out to-night; but I know nothing that is more important to impress upon young men than this—that, for all your correctness of outward life, your familiarity with the Word of God, your respect for what is sacred, and your general amiableness of character, you shall and must utterly fail in fulfilling the great end of life, unless there is "the root of the matter" in you, your hearts being renewed by Almighty grace. May it not be that to some of you God is saying, "I know

thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God"?

Now, do not misunderstand this word "perfect." No man is perfect, in the absolute sense of the term, though we are to strive after this as the goal. No meaner standard are we to set before us, than to "be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." But, if our own experience and observations do not tell us, all Scripture does, that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." We are told of Job, that he was "a perfect man and upright," and yet what does he himself say? "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."

It was not because Amaziah was not sinless, that his life proved such a failure, but because *he was not thorough-going in his principle and piety.*

Let this be the lesson we bear away with us. No lesson more needed. English life at present seems to be afflicted with a plague of levity. There is so much hollowness and unreality, so much veneer in character and work, that it behoves us to preach aloud the gospel of thoroughness. A short time ago some workmen were engaged in trying to remove a piece of old London wall. They tried with hammers, then with pick-axes, then they had to borrow the help of some stalwart navvies, but to no purpose, the wall seemed to smile at all their efforts; at last they were obliged to have recourse to boring, and blowing it up like a piece of solid rock. That is hardly the way they build now-a-days, for a man might almost push over some of our brick walls with his hand.

Now, this is just an illustration of what I mean, the want of thoroughness in every branch of industry and in every walk of life. When a man's own character is not solid, real, permeated through and through with Christian principle, you cannot have any guarantee of the genuineness of his work. They say that if you send to Birmingham an old copper coal-scuttle, a sovereign, and a galvanic battery, they will send you back a thousand pounds' worth of gold plate. Brummagem work is not confined to such articles as these. Shams abound everywhere. Gilt and paint carry the day. Ours is an age of tinsel.

And the worst of it is that this unrealness characterises much of the religion amongst us. I sometimes meet with a horrible form of Antinomianism, which virtually says, "Anything will do for me, I am a disciple of Christ:" and so the work is actually more slovenly and imperfect because the individual claims to be "not under the law, but under grace." Why, it is almost as monstrous as the proposal a good young man made to his landlady, that his own excellent Christian example should serve in lieu of weekly payment for his lodgings!

A man—I don't care who he is—dishonours Christ, when any other person is put to disadvantage by his piety. If you imagine you are more free to do slipshod work because you are a Christian, I say, it is precisely the reverse. It is just because you claim to be the Lord's that any sort of work will not do. Bearing His name, you are responsible to Him for every detail of your daily life. If your secular duties are more imperfectly discharged because you are a believer, you do great wrong to the Redeemer. If you snatch a little of your employer's time to scatter tracts, or prepare for a Sabbath class, or even to read your Bible; or if, in business hours, your thoughts

are so given to spiritual themes that you cannot do justice to your work, in any of these cases you do real harm to religion. A man's piety is of the true sort only when it helps to make him—if an artisan, a better workman; if in an office, a better clerk; if behind the counter, a better salesman, than he would have been without it. Our religion is given us to be a universal blessing, to sharpen our faculties, to quicken our diligence, to increase our likelihood of success.

If you have the grace of God in your heart, as the spring of your whole life, you have the promise of the first psalm, "And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." You have the guarantee of the highest of all success. This may not always mean earthly abundance and ease; for it sometimes happens that a man's best days are those in which he has the least of the world's smile; but if your heart is right with God, all must be well; and we know who has said that "the little that a righteous man hath is better than the abundance of many wicked."

Remember, then, that religion is something within you, working outward from the centre, and that centre a heart possessed by the grace of God. It is not, as too many imagine it, a reformation commencing in the outer circumference of one's life and habits, and then working its way inwards to the core till the heart is reached and changed; nay, but it takes its start in the innermost recesses of our being, and from thence reaches outwards, till the whole character and conduct are brought under its blissful sway.

Ah! brothers, you have the rough world before you, with its buffetings, and its trials, and its difficulties, and its snares; and there is not one of you that will not find your greatest need of all to be true religion. Even Robert Burns wrote to a friend:—

"When rantin' roun' in pleasure's ring,
Religion may be blinded;
And if she gie a random sting,
But little may be minded.
But when on life we're tempest-tossed,
And conscience but a canker,
A correspondence fixed wi' Heaven,
Is sure a noble anchor."

That correspondence with heaven can be enjoyed only through Him who is the "One Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Lord, let my hope rest there alone! "Have you no doubts, no fears?" asked a friend of Sir David Brewster, the eminent scientific philosopher, as he lay on his bed of death. "None; the blood of Christ has washed away my sins; I have life in Christ; this I am sure of, for God has said it." "Have you no difficulty in believing the Bible?" his friend further inquired, knowing how scepticism prevailed amongst scientific men. "None," he replied; adding, "Alas! few receive the truth of Jesus. But why? it is the pride of intellect, forgetting its own limits, stepping beyond its own province. How little the wisest of mortals know of anything! How preposterous of worms to think of fathoming the counsels of the Almighty!" "But, do the Christian mysteries give you no trouble?" "No. Why should they? We are surrounded by mysteries. My own being is a mystery—I cannot explain the relation of my soul to my body. Everybody believes much which he cannot understand. The Trinity and the Atonement are a great deep; so is eternity; so is Providence. It gives me no uneasiness that I cannot explain them. They are secret things that belong to God. I thank God the way of salvation is so simple; no laboured argument, no high attainment, is required. To believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ is to live; I trust in Him and enjoy His peace."

Such were among the latest words of one of the most eminent of the scientific men of our day. It was my privilege to know the man who uttered them. He was constitutionally slow to believe anything that was not established on good evidence. I thank God for the dying testimony of such a man. It does me good to recall it, and to tell it. What served for him, may do for you, and for me. Oh! get the matter settled now; come over at once to the safe landing-place which the Gospel provides; so will you have the guarantee of a successful life, a peaceful death, and glorious eternity! Amen.

d.

and enjoy His

ne of the most
y. It was my
them. He was
that was not
od for the dying
od to recall it,
do for you, and
; come over at
ospel provides;
ccessful life, a
men.

AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT,

"Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him."—DANIEL vi. 3.

XVII.

AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT.

MY aim in this address will be to point out to you the important fact which our text asserts, that the secret of Daniel's remarkable rise from step to step, until he became only second in rank and power to the great King of Persia, was not any accident of his birth, nor lucky chance, nor influence of others, but the "excellent spirit" that was in him.

I would like to enquire what this excellent spirit was; for I believe it to have been a type of character which, in any age and in any part of the world, is almost certain to bring a man preferment and success. It was not mere talent that raised Daniel to his high position; no doubt he was a shrewd, able, clever man. We read in the 1st chapter that he was "skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science," but it was something more than this that brought him his promotion. Intellect, like ice, is colourless; no one has more of it than the devil. Let a young man have large mental capacity, it will not weigh for much, if that be all. His real strength or weakness is closely linked with his moral nature; the heart, even more than the brain, determines the man.

Cyaxares II. (here called Darius) had just ascended the Persian throne. As the last verse of the previous chapter tells us, he was sixty-two years of age. Not possessing the

energy and elasticity of youth, and moreover, being enervated, as profane history alleges, by sensuality and indolence, he felt himself incapable of personally managing the affairs of his great kingdom. Under these circumstances, he had the good sense to look out one hundred and twenty able men, whom he appointed as princes or satraps over the empire: and over these again three presidents or viceroys: but of these presidents one was chief, and this high office was conferred upon Daniel, a distinction in his case all the more remarkable that he was a stranger and foreigner, a man of a different race and religion altogether. You ask me why, out of all these one hundred and twenty-three men, was Daniel selected, and elevated to this high position? I answer in the words of my text, "This Daniel was preferred above the presidents and the princes, because an excellent spirit was in him."

If I can stimulate some of you to seek after the possession of this "excellent spirit," we shall not have met in vain; and who can tell but, with God's blessing, this service may have some influence on your future career?

Daniel's character is in this book so distinctly pourtrayed, that there is no possibility of mistaking it. You see the man at once: in bold and clearly-defined colours he stands before you. In him we behold a man whose conscience holds a tight rein over his lower nature; we see that stern loyalty to principle is not incompatible with the urbanity and courtesy of the perfect gentleman; we learn that the busiest man may be a man of prayer; that fervent piety may be sustained under circumstances most unfavourable to its growth; and that a robust faith in God can carry one bravely through the most trying outward conditions it is possible to experience. Yes; but to aid your memory, and to give point to my subject, I remark:—

I. That this "excellent spirit," to which Daniel owed his preferment, was a spirit of *self-control*. He kept his body under. He held the mastery of his animal nature. He laid an iron hand upon his appetites and passions. He crucified the flesh. There is one little sentence in the first chapter that speaks volumes for the young man, and he was quite a young man at that time, not more, it is believed, than eighteen or nineteen. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine that he drank."

Along with three other young men, countrymen of his own, he was being educated and trained for life at the Babylonian Court. The king wanted to have fine, handsome, good-looking young fellows attending upon him; and, under the notion that dainty fare and choicest wines would be favourable to this, he gave instruction that these four Hebrew youths should daily be fed from his own table. Daniel had sense enough to know that high living and wine-bibbing was by no means the best thing for sound health and a good complexion; besides, as a religious Jew he was forbidden to partake of viands from the table of a heathen; and he was not going to violate his conscience, even for the king of Babylon. He was a firm believer in farinaceous food and Adam's ale; and so requested for himself and his companions that they might be fed on pulse and water. This "pulse" was a kind of simple pudding or pottage, made of beans, or lentils, or some sort of grain; plain fare, perhaps, but, I dare say, very good and palatable.

Now, here is a lesson on a temperate and physiological habit of life that young men would do well to attend to, who propose to invest any capital in their brains. It was

through no miracle that these pulse-fed, water-drinking Hebrew youths had a better constitution, and clearer head, and healthier complexion, than the pampered young Chaldeans around them: it was the natural operation of hygienic principles. It is an excellent feature of our times that so much attention is being given to the laws of health; and it is a notable and unquestionable fact that the more the whole subject is looked into by thoughtful and competent men, the more distinctly do they arrive at the conclusion, that nothing will be so likely to bring about an improvement in the national health, and make us a strong and sturdy people, as the adoption of a simpler diet, and the absolute rejection of alcohol as a luxury. An old proverb says that "a loaden stomach makes a leaden mind;" and many is the man who, by gluttony and excess, has impaired a good constitution, destroyed his usefulness, and brought himself to a premature grave. We may laugh at the extreme to which vegetarians go; but Daniel, who, both physically and mentally must have been a finely-developed man, and who certainly reached a great age, appears to have thought animal food unnecessary; at all events, he kept a most simple table.

Thank God, the tendency in our day, even amongst the wealthy, is towards a plainer diet; and soon, I trust, the portly aldermanic gourmand, whose heaven is a sumptuous dinner, washed down with the choicest wines, will be as rare an animal as the *ichthyosaurus*, or some other reptile of the secondary strata. Many is the Scottish youth, like the late Hugh Miller, whose sturdy physique and splendid brain have proved what oatmeal can do; and, I verily believe, we should have a finer race of young fellows here in London were the example more largely followed. Christianity does not encourage asceticism; it does not call upon us to afflict the body, nor refuse the good things

God has provided for us; but yet it teaches us that man must eat to live, and not (as some do) live to eat.

But, if gluttony has slain its thousands, strong drink has slain its tens of thousands. Daniel started life as an abstainer, and there is no evidence that he ever departed from this rule. I confess to a great admiration of his plan. He "purposed in his heart," so we read, not to take wine. There was no fuss made about it. He didn't bluster. He didn't fling his own practice in the face of his friends. He didn't browbeat and miscall those who differed from him. He simply purposed in his heart. He said, "This is to be my rule."

I have not a word to say against making a public vow, writing the name in a book, receiving a beautifully-embossed card, wearing a coloured ribbon, or becoming a Good Templar. God bless every method and device that will save men from the cup; let a man sign the pledge in the most formal manner, and wear a yard of blue silk, if it will help him; but, what I urge every young man here at least to do, is to follow the example of Daniel.

The drinking customs of Babylon were excessive. It was a shocking place for a young man to live in. Its gaiety, and luxury, and gross licentiousness probably surpassed that of any city of modern times. What with its fifty rectangular streets, each of them one hundred and fifty feet wide; its hanging gardens; its noble river Euphrates flowing through the centre, and spanned by bridges of magnificent architecture; its splendid palaces, piazzas, and bazaars, it was a place that ministered to the senses every conceivable enjoyment. The young men of Babylon, as history informs us, were self-indulgent and profligate, devoted to enervating pleasure and corrupting amusements.

To all this temptation Daniel was exposed. Young, healthful, clever, and good-looking, his company would be much sought after. He moved in the highest circles of society. At the great Chaldean dinner parties he was deemed an acquisition. If a state banquet were given at the palace, an invitation would come to the young Jew in such terms as these—"His Majesty the King commands the presence of Belteshazzar on such an evening to meet the princes of the realm."

And it added enormously to the strength of the temptation that Daniel was far from his own family and home. It is when a young fellow leaves his native place, and takes up his residence in a town where nobody knows him, that we discover how much of the real grit of principle is in him. That he may indulge in any vice without his friends and relatives knowing anything about it, is an argument which the devil well understands how to ply.

But the young Hebrew was not to be caught. His purpose was made, and he stuck to it. "No wine for me. I do not require it; and vow not to muddle my brain, and expose myself to temptation." I daresay the young gentlemen of Babylon laughed at the strait-laced Hebrew, but he could afford to bear their jeers; for this moral determination, this high-toned rectitude, was the straight path to advancement, as the sequel proved. Nebuchadnezzar and his successors saw what stuff young Daniel was made of; and ultimately he was preferred above all the presidents and princes, because this excellent spirit of self-control was in him.

II. This "excellent spirit" was more than a spirit of self-control, it was a spirit of *genuine piety*. Much as we admire the temperance, the lofty courage, the sublime moral heroism of Daniel, we must go deeper than this to

find the secret of his strength. I quite acknowledge that, even apart from his religion, he was a fine specimen of a man. His moderation and abstinence gave him a healthy body. Pure blood flowed through his veins. No blotches on his face told of secret vices. He had a fresh complexion, a clear eye, and a steady hand. His whole gait bespoke a manly and noble nature.

But, had there been nothing more than this, you and I would never have heard his name. He would have left no impression on history. He was, above all, a man of God. Three times over in this Book he is styled "a man greatly beloved"; and Ezekiel brackets him with Noah and Job, when he speaks of men who had special power with God.

I believe that his convictions were the fruit of early training. In the home of his childhood, far, far away, he had learned of the true God; and all through his career this thought of the personal, though unseen, Jehovah was the supreme factor in his daily life. Verily, he endured as though he saw Him who is invisible. He had constant intercourse with Heaven. To him God was a reality, a living and reliable friend, to whom he could take every difficulty, and on whom he could trust in every danger.

It was this that carried him through. He would never have been the man he was but for his pure religion, his devotion to the faith of his fathers. He was not ashamed of this inheritance. Now that he had come to the big city, and was on the way to become a great man, he did not snap his fingers at his early training, and swagger about the bigotry of his own people. He did not toss to the winds his religious convictions, and say, "Come now, in Rome one must do as Rome does, and try to forget all about conscience."

On the contrary, the superstition, and infidelity, and debauchery he witnessed, made him cling the more tenaciously to the faith of his fathers. His deepest instincts told him on which side truth lay. He was prepared to maintain his ground against all comers. The Chaldean wise men might look to the stars, Daniel looked beyond the stars to the great God that made them. Staring him in the face every day was the magnificent temple of Belus, or Baal, a marvellous pile, whose lofty tower stretched heavenward far above the highest pyramids of Egypt; but Daniel believed in the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and could say with David, "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

It was Jerusalem *versus* Babylon; that was about the long and short of it. He would make no compromise. Where truth and duty were involved, he would not yield an inch. "Mine," he said, "be the God of my fathers; mine the ancient faith of Israel; mine the dear old songs of Zion." Yet, all this tenacity to religious principle was united with a courtesy and urbanity that secured the admiration of all, and bespoke the true gentleman. Uncompromising as he was, he did not make himself a bore and a nuisance to other people. There was no sourness of temper, nor incivility of manners. He knew how to be firm, and yet polite; conscientious, yet forbearing.

My dear brothers, I do wish you would take for your model Daniel in Babylon. To many of you, this great city is what the Chaldean capital was to the young Hebrew. You are tempted not only to vice, but to error. You meet with those who jeer at your religious notions. They would laugh you out of your most solemn convictions. Be prepared for them. Remember that those who sap your

religion sap your morality, and compass your utter ruin. As the Bishop of Calcutta said in India, on the platform of a native society for the reform of Hindoo morals, "If you wish to make anything eternal, you must build it on the Christian religion. That is the only thing in this world that is eternal."

Now, the point of our text is, that it was Daniel's "excellent spirit" that led to his preferment. And so it was. The successive kings he served saw his loyalty to his God, and judged that he was a man who could be trusted. His piety actually led to his promotion.

I maintain that, in the long run, this often proves to be the case. Those who are over you may care not an atom for religion, yet they know its value in developing genuineness and solidity of character. This tribute is often paid, even by men who have no fear of God before their eyes. They see that the Christian young man, the Bible-loving, Sabbath-keeping, Church-going youth, is the lad to be trusted. An abominable exception to this rule, doubtless, sometimes occurs; and, of course, the most is made of it, and all the world hears of it; but, as a simple matter of fact, it is unchallengeable, that even men of the world, looking out for some one to fill a vacant post of trust and responsibility, give a wide berth to the atheist and the libertine, and always prefer a conscientious Christian. My eye fell the other day upon the following advertisement:—"Army Service. Young men wishing to join Her Majesty's Army, will, on application at any Post-Office in the United Kingdom, be supplied, without charge, with a pamphlet containing detailed information as to conditions of service, etc. Great prospects of promotion are offered to young men." Well, thought I, this is quite in a line with my

subject this evening. I would act as a recruiting-officer for the King of kings; and, with far greater truth than the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, can offer "great prospects of promotion" to those of you who will serve in the hosts of the living God.

III. I observe that this "excellent spirit" to which Daniel owed his preferment was a spirit of unshaken *faith in God*. All through his troubles—and they were many and great—he never lost confidence in God, never failed to betake himself to Him in prayer. This was the more remarkable because he was in the very midst of that oriental philosophy which has always proved the parent of the darkest scepticism. The pretentious teachings of the Chaldean Magi would have bewildered the mind of a less decided believer than Daniel, and drawn him into dreamy speculations before which his faith would have withered away. Even then there began to be taught a plausible materialism which is of the essence of infidelity. Out of Chaldea sprang the opinions to which, at a later period, Democritus gave shape in his famous atomic theory of the universe. To this theory, probably, Lucretius owed the production of his famous work, "De Rerum Natura," which appeared about half a century before the birth of Christ, and in which the author, seeking to free men from the trammels of superstition, rebounds to the other extreme, and essays to show that there is no such being as God.

It is precisely in the footsteps of such men that many of our bolder rationalists at the present day are walking, men like the late Porfessor Clifford, like Spencer, and Harrison, and Tyndall, who virtually teach that the existence and active interferences of a Supreme and personal Deity are not necessary to be supposed, in order to account for the phenomena of nature, and that the central energy

that controls the universe is an unconscious and eternal force.

Daniel's faith in God was too deep and strong to suffer any serious shock from such spurious philosophy. The king himself bore witness that in all matters of wisdom and understanding he was "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers in the realm"; and as results proved, this superior intelligence was not incompatible with firm confidence in Israel's God. Daniel stands out pre-eminent, even amongst the saints of Scripture, as a man of prayer. With a regularity he would allow nothing to interfere with, "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God." Like David, he could say, "Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice."

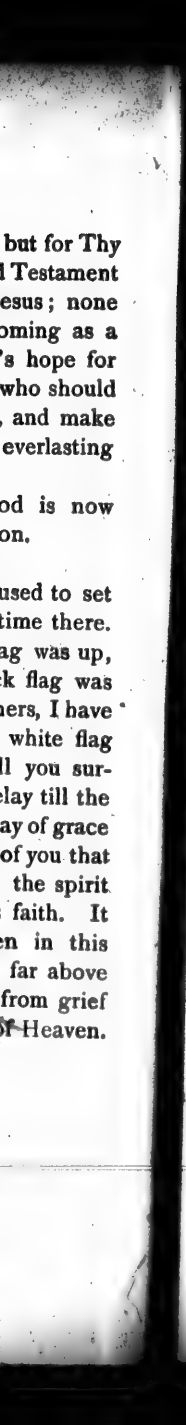
Young friend, whatever you may learn or forget in this great Babylon, forget not the throne of grace, before which your Christian mother taught you to bow with reverent knee! Whatever else you do, or fail to do, neglect not daily to take your wants to God, and ask Him to help and guide you in the struggle of life. You may have immense difficulties to cope with, dark doubts to conquer, fierce temptations to resist, successive misfortunes to encounter; but in the midst of all remember you have an unseen Friend to go to, who will hear your prayer, and supply all your need.

Perhaps, as yet, you do not know that Friend? Let me remind you that, beautiful as Daniel's character was, he felt himself a sinner before God. No penitent ever was more humble in his confessions than he. No saint ever expressed himself more clearly as altogether dependent on Divine and covenant mercy. "We do not present our

supplications," says he, "for our righteousness, but for Thy great mercies." Of all the prophets of the Old Testament none more distinctly predicted the coming of Jesus; none indicated more plainly the object of His coming as a substitute to atone for the guilty. All Daniel's hope for salvation was founded on the Messiah's work, who should "finish transgression, and make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness."

To that Saviour I point you to-night. God is now waiting to be gracious. He is ready to pardon.

When the old Romans attacked a city, they used to set up a white flag at the gate, and leave it some time there. If the garrison surrendered whilst the white flag was up, their lives were spared; but after that the black flag was run up, and every man was put to death. Brothers, I have to tell you that to-night, God be thanked, the white flag of infinite mercy is flying in the breeze. Will you surrender to God and live? or, are you still to delay till the black banner is unfurled, which tells that your day of grace has gone for ever? May God give to each one of you that "excellent spirit" which was found in Daniel; the spirit of self-control, of genuine piety, and of fearless faith. It shall make your preferment more likely, even in this world; and in the world to come shall lift you far above earth's potentates and princes; shall raise you from grief and groan to a golden throne beside the King of Heaven. Amen.



but for Thy
l Testament
esus; none
oming as a
's hope for
who should
, and make
everlasting

od is now
on.

used to set
time there.
ag was up,
k flag was
hers, I have
white flag
ll you sur-
lay till the
ay of grace
of you that
the spirit
faith. It
en in this
far above
from grief
f Heaven.

A YOUNG MAN COME TO HIMSELF.

"*And when he came to himself.*"—LUKE xv. 17.

XVIII.

A YOUNG MAN COME TO HIMSELF.

ONLY six words, but six sermons would not exhaust their meaning!

This is one of those touches that make the Bible so remarkable a Book. Just as an artist who is gifted with real genius can, by the dip of his brush, produce a powerful effect which a less skilful painter cannot realise by a potful of colour, so we often find it in the Word of God.

I am not going to take up the parable of the prodigal son. I think it right to say so, because this unhappy prodigal has been preached upon *ad nauseam*. I am told there are more addresses given upon this young scapegrace than on any other subject in Scripture. I heard lately that the people attending a great mission-hall in the East of London sent to a popular evangelist, asking him to come and take a service; but added, "Please avoid the parable of the prodigal son."

I sympathise with this request. The Bible is a big Book, and contains an endless variety. Everybody knows that this parable is one of the most beautiful gems of Scripture. It is like a great diamond, which, turn it on whatsoever side you please, sparkles with exquisite radiance. I just chip off a little fragment, and use it as a lens, to look into some of the deepest operations of the human heart.

"And when he came to himself." Then he had run away from himself. Precisely. He had not only run away from his father, and his family, and his home; but he had run away from himself, made escape from the voice of reason and of conscience, from his better nature, from all that constituted him a man. Like many a young fool, he thought that happiness was to be found in freedom from every sort of restraint, and so, with that air of *abandon* which often characterises such a class, he determined to be his own master (which means his own slave), and he plunged into voluptuousness and sensuality.

No doubt he thought it a very jolly life. Every desire was gratified; every passion had its festival of pleasure. But, of course, this could not last long. If you unhook the pendulum of a clock, the works will go fast and merrily, but they will soon run down. Presently his money was spent; his capacity for pleasure blunted; his character gone; and then the reaction came. The man was famishing. It was not only food he wanted, but the hunger of home was upon him, the yearning for sympathy, and respect, and love; and this brought him to his senses; the prodigal "came to himself." Now, I am not going to suppose that there is a single prodigal here to-night; and yet, speaking frankly, I do not doubt that in this large assembly there is many a young man who has not yet "come to himself": so we shall take up this point, and talk of it a little together.

What is it for a young man to come to himself? In common every-day life the expression is variously used, but always denotes that the person has come to better judgment, or to a fuller use of his faculties, than before. Suppose a man has got into a terrific passion; something has exasperated him, the colour is in his cheek, he is clean mad

with rage, and will not listen to anything you have to say to him; the best thing to do under such circumstances is to leave him alone a little, give his wrath time to cool; and when by-and-by he is calmed down, you feel you can reason with him, because, as you say, he has at last "come to himself." Or, suppose that a man is fool enough, or wicked enough, to put that enemy in his mouth that steals away the brains; he has been ensnared into drinking till his brain reels, he doesn't know what he is about; it is useless to speak to him then about the sin of intemperance, about the disgrace he is bringing upon himself; you resolve to wait till the effects of liquor have worn off, or, as you put it, till the man comes to himself again.

I need not say, however, that the expression on the lips of our Divine Lord has a broader and more serious meaning. A man may be perfectly calm in temper, clear in head, and vigorous in body, and yet never have really "come to himself." He may never have apprehended where his real manhood lies. There is a great deal that we have in common with the lower animals; and, whilst you keep to that plane—so long as you live merely for your baser appetites and passions—so long as all you do is simply to sleep, and walk, and eat, and drink, and toil because you must toil, you have not yet come to yourselves, as reasonable, moral, and spiritual beings.

For there are mainly three things in which a man is distinguished from the brutes; and it is by these, and not by what he has in common with them, that his life should be inspired and his actions governed. I say that a man truly comes to himself only when the grand motors of his conduct are reason, conscience, and the indwelling Spirit of God.

And first, I name *reason* or mind. I am not going to

stop to discuss whether this is possessed by any of the lower animals. There is not the slightest doubt that with certain of them there does exist some approximation to the reasoning faculty. When I was a minister in a country charge, I used to notice how much more willing my horse was to turn in to some farms than to others. The sensible creature acted on a sound and perfect syllogism. It said to itself, "At such a farm I always get a feed of oats. I am fond of oats; therefore, I shall turn in to such a farm." Some dogs are certainly possessed of a kind of logical faculty; at least they act in a very logical way; more logical many a time than their masters. And Sir John Lubbock has told us such things about the intelligence of ants as are almost incredible.

But, after all, to man belongs the distinction, the grand and noble pre-eminence, of being a thinking being.

And I take leave to say to you, that however laborious your life may be, and honest, and harmless, you have not come to your true selves if you are not cultivating and developing the mind that God has given you.

In a community like this, a very large number of persons must earn their livelihood by manual labour. There must be masons, and carpenters, and blacksmiths, and plasterers, and polishers, and so forth. Now, it is no misfortune to be a mechanic; but it is a misfortune to be only a mechanic. Man was intended to be a machine, but he was intended to be more than a machine. This mere machine life is not confined to such occupations as I have mentioned; there are thousands of salesmen, and shop-assistants, and officemen, and bank-clerks, and so forth, whose life is quite as much a mechanical routine as though they stood all day at the bench or the anvil. Any man who lives so far down that his trade or his profession satisfies him; any man who

cultivates no other part of his faculties than those that are necessary to earn his bread, is living below the dignity of his manhood, and has not yet come to his true self. There is not a man now listening to me who ought not to be a thinker; and to be a thinker it is necessary that you be a reader. If your business is such, if your hours are so long, that you have never an evening to yourselves, no leisure for study, nor attending a literary society, nor anything of that kind, I do not hesitate to say, wherever the fault may be, there's something decidedly wrong. No man has a right to make of himself, or to make of another, a mere machine, moving his limbs from morning to night like the beam of a stationary engine. I would urge you, if it be within the limits of possibility, to add a something every day to your mental stores; and all the more if your moments are scarce should you be careful in your selection of the books you read. Everybody knows the saying of Francis Bacon, that "reading makes a full man"; but many forget another observation of his, "Some books are to be tasted; others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." I make no apology for these remarks, and hope they may prompt some good brother here to bestow a little more culture on the intellectual part of his being.

But, secondly, a man is raised above the other animals around him by the possession of a *conscience* or moral sense; and one may be said to "come to himself" when that inward monitor asserts its due authority over him. A person who acts as though he had no conscience, and no delicate perception of the distinction between right and wrong (and, alas! there are thousands of such persons all around us), belies his humanity, and brings himself down to the level of the brute.

The lower animals have no sense of moral obligation.

They can distinguish the pleasant from the painful; but they cannot distinguish the right from the wrong.

Though this, too, must be taken with modification; there are instances which seem to show that they are conscious of deserving praise or blame, and, therefore, of having been good or bad. The little dog that leaped on my study table and scattered all the papers in wild confusion on the floor, looks, as I enter the room, the picture of conscious guilt, and rolling himself at my feet, with obsequious fawn, seems to say, "Whip me, but do it as kindly as you can."

Still, after all, this is but the faintest shadow of conscience. To all intents and purposes the brute has no moral sense; that is the prerogative of man. I hesitate not to say that one of the grandest possessions a young man can have is a pure and sensitive conscience.

You will find many who appear to have no conscience at all. The moral rightness or wrongness of an action is not a question that ever troubles them. Can I increase my business? Can I get this stock disposed of? Can I turn these goods into money? That is the only point with them; and there are actually men that will stand up before you, and thrust their thumbs into their vests, and say, "No whimsical, puritanical notions for me; there is so much money to be made, and I am not very particular as to how I make it."

A lad that talks in that style has not "come to himself." Believe me, gentlemen, it is a sure mark of a backward and downward course when a man becomes less and less scrupulous about the right and the wrong of a thing he is going to do. That is an admirable verse of Bishop Ken's:—

"Let all thy converse be sincere;
Keep conscience as the noontide clear;
Think how all-seeing God thy ways
And all thy secret thoughts surveys."

I have sometimes wondered why Paul, when writing to the saints at Ephesus, should say such things as these:—"Putting away lying, speak every man the truth with his neighbour. Let him that stole, steal no more," etc. Fancy writing in this style to Christian members! What would my congregation say if some time when I am from home I were to write them a letter bidding them give up lying and stealing! Our missionaries in China throw great light upon the matter. Only in last month's *Record*, I find one of them saying that it is all but impossible in many cases to get the native heathen to understand what is meant by "sin" in the Christian use of the word. The conscience requires to be educated, the moral sense quickened, as only the religion of Christ can effect it. Oh! it is a fine thing to know that, even in this huge mammon-serving city, where there is so much sharp practice, and extortion, and over-reaching, and adulteration, and fraudulence of every form and kind, there are hundreds, ay, thousands of young men, so fixed in their high and holy principles they would rather sacrifice all they possess, and forego any advantage, than do what they know to be wrong!

But, thirdly, I must still go a step further; I have now to name an element which raises you and me to an immeasurable elevation above the brute creation; and that is our *spiritual nature*. Amongst the lower animals there may be something very like to mind or reason; there may even be something which we imagine approaches conscience, or a rough moral sense; but, when we come to the religious principle, there is no bridging the gulf. To man

alone belongs a sense of accountability to God, and a capacity for knowing, trusting, and loving his Maker. Man has been called a religious animal; and the definition is so far correct that no other animal is religious; that every part of the human race possesses some form of religion; and that just as man rises in the scale of culture and true civilisation, does this spiritual element become more developed.

I say then, a man, if he is not religious, is scarcely a man. He wants that in which his manhood chiefly lies.

And I mean, of course, not a mere outward form, but an inward grace. I speak of spiritual yearnings, of heavenly impulses, of cravings after something better than earth can supply. I assert that he who becomes a true Christian is a thousand times more of a man that he was before he became a Christian. So long as your life is short of this, and you are "living, and moving, and having your being" within the range of your bodily senses, you have forsaken your true self. Conversion to God is nothing less than an inward revolution. The change from lunacy to sanity may be more striking and discernible to the outward eye, but it is not nearly so radical and so thorough as the change from nature to grace. When a careless, godless man becomes an earnest Christian, it is the commonest thing possible to hear people say his head is turned.

And it is true: but it happens to be now turned the right way. God says of the unconverted, "Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." No man is in his right mind until he comes to Christ. Some of you know that when you were converted your first thought was, What a madman have I been till now! what a world of delusion was I living in! There are men here, who, if God's Spirit were to descend upon

them; and show them their sins, and bring them to Christ, would feel that up to this hour they had been crazed, they had been living in a fool's paradise. The world of unbelievers is but a huge Bedlam; and every case of real conversion is just the Holy Spirit bringing another out of delirium to a sound mind, so that, for the first time in his life, he really "comes to himself."

You who are still unsaved don't know what you are losing. If ever you shall be turned to God, you will look back on this period of your life as utterly wasted, thrown away! Christ has offered to do for you all that a divine Saviour can do for a lost soul. Heaven undertakes and guarantees your salvation, if you will but say "Amen" to the Gospel, and put yourself into the hands of Jesus. Oh, awake, awake from the hallucination of sin! Escape from the delirium of unbelief! Come to Christ, and, so doing, you will come to yourself.

When is it generally that a man comes to himself? Ah! let this story tell. When he gets into trouble. When he "has spent all," and "begins to be in want," and "no man gives unto him." I don't mean to say that it is only under such conditions. Thank God, no. There have been men sitting here, with every earthly thing to make them contented, and God has made this pulpit a bow from which He has shot an arrow straight to the centre of their heart, and the arrow was never pulled out till they could call Christ their own. Your sister wrote you a serious letter, and dropped it into your village post-office far away; it was moistened with tears, and perfumed with prayers; and when you read it you clean broke down and fell on your knees; and since that hour you have been another man.

The delicious memory of those Sabbath evenings in your country home, ay, maybe twenty years ago, when

in the gloaming (for the candles were scarcely needed) you all gathered round, and old father put on his spectacles, and opened the big well-worn Bible, and mother had the youngest on her knee, and you all read verse by verse, and said your catechism, and then sung a psalm together; I say, the memory of this has chastened you amid the follies of this great city, and made you thirst for purer streams than the giddy world can yield.

But, as a rule, it is by some trouble or sorrow that God brings a man to himself. Don't imagine that anyone becomes a Christian by accident—that you can pick up religion as you pick up a lost purse. I shall ask all those men now sitting before me, or in these galleries, who have postponed the great decision for the past ten years, whether in these ten years they have come any nearer to God? and, if they know their own hearts, they will confess they have been getting further and further away from Him.

And yet, I do not believe there is an altogether careless soul here. If you think there is, find him out, and I will lay my hand upon his shoulder and ask him; and he will tell me he has his moments of conviction, and anxiety, and fear, when he would give all the world, if he had it, to know that he is saved! You may say very little; but, for every time you speak about religion, you think about it a thousand times. The thought seizes you as you are walking down to the City of a morning, or sitting on the tram-car, or engaged in the office, or busy with your soft goods, or hardware, or whatever it be. Still the question pursues you, What of your soul? what of eternity?

But there are times when you are specially pliable, and these are times of trouble. Dear me, have you forgotten that illness you had, when the sound of life for a time was

hushed, and in the stillness of the sick-room there rose up within your soul a consciousness of all you ought to have been, but failed to be; and the world seemed so worthless, and eternity so near? Then you came to yourself, as you had never done before. Many a man has "come to himself" under the blow of some crushing bereavement. Yes; all the sermons in the world would not move him; all our arguments failed to make an impression. But one day there came to him a stealthy preacher without notes, and that pale preacher was Death; and when he saw his bonnie little sister lying cold in her coffin, or the turf laid smoothly over the grave that contained his precious mother, he could stand it no longer; he said, "From this hour my treasure and my heart shall be in heaven."

And we have had young men here who, like this youth in the parable, never came to themselves till they were in want. You were out of a situation; you could find nothing to do; all your testimonials failed to get you an opening. Some of your friends treated you, as you thought, shabbily. You had letters blowing you up for being unfortunate. You had spent all, and no one gave unto you. Men who used to shake your hand so tightly that your knuckles ached, now gave you but the coldest nod. How next week's lodging was to be paid you could not see. And then, only then, in the bitterness of your extremity, you flung yourself upon God, and found that you had a Father and a Friend above. Oh, how many never find this out till the day of sorrow comes! A good, pious man met a poor ragged urchin in the street, and, putting his hand on his head, said, "My little man, when your father and your mother forsake you, who will take you up?" And what, think you, was the wee laddie's answer? "The perlice, sir."

Ah! there are many who ought to know better, that seem to be as friendless as that little boy. I know I am speaking just now to some who are in difficulties; they have spent all, and there is a famine in the land. Oh! do what this youth did, whom Jesus has painted. When he came to himself, his first thought was, "I will arise and go to my father." Wise resolve. Sure proof that he had come to himself. This is what I urge you all to do to-night. Rise up at once, and go to God. Whatever your age, whatever your station, whatever your line of business, whatever your prospects, take the thought of God with you down into your whole life—a God at peace with you through Christ, in whom you trust. And this shall be to you, as most heartily I pray it may be to one and all, a prosperous and happy year!

GOD OUR HOPE IN YOUTH.

"Thou art my hope, O Lord God: Thou art my trust from my youth."

XIX.

GOD OUR HOPE IN YOUTH.

It was a man well advanced in life who uttered these words. Read the psalm through, and you will see that. "Cast me not off," he says, "in the time of old age: forsake me not when my strength faileth. Now also, when I am old-and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not."

Ay, the snows of age are falling on his head; his back bends under the weight of years; his faculties are no longer acute as once they were, and the world has lost its power to charm; but—is the frail old man dejected and forlorn? No, nothing of the kind: the faith of his youth proves the comfort of his age; and, as he leans his hand upon his staff, he lifts up his eyes to Heaven, and says, "Thou art my hope, O Lord God; Thou art my trust from my youth."

What I wish to bring out and illustrate is this, that a pious trust in God at the outset of life guarantees a blessed hope in God at the end of it.

Now, if we look only to this world, limiting our view to existence here on earth, I grant you, hope belongs rather to youth than to age—to the spring time rather than to the autumn of life. In boyhood and adolescence we look forward; we live very much in the future; life is still before us, full of brightness and promise; but when old age comes, memory to a great extent takes the place of hope; we live in the past, and take pleasure in recalling the days that are gone.

Well, to most of us the former is the more attractive of the two. To myself, I confess, the tiniest flower of spring has a charm unpossessed by all the floral beauty of autumn. A little primrose or anemone, or a crocus peeping through the soil, conveys an exquisite pleasure to my mind, which all the wealth of asters and chrysanthemums cannot yield. And why? Because the former speak the language of hope: the latter of retrospect. The one says, "How beautiful is the summer that is coming!" the other says, "How beautiful the summer that is past!"

I quite acknowledge that, from both quarters, a refined and cultured mind can draw much enjoyment. Delicious as the first breath and beams of morning are, there is a glory in the sunset too, and a spell oft-times about the still evening hour. If the poets Campbell and Young sing of the "Pleasures of Hope," hardly less sweetly does Rogers sing of the "Pleasures of Memory."

But, after all, it is a melancholy thing to dwell only in the past; and the old man who has no other satisfaction is poor indeed! Such persons I do sometimes meet with; and a sadder sight I rarely witness. Says the old worldling, "I have had a fair share of earthly pleasure, and I must not murmur now;" but his tone is that of one whose joys are just expiring, and whose future no Christian hope "has gilded with prophetic ray." To the world he had said, "Thou art my trust from my youth;" but to that world he cannot say, "and thou art now my hope in age." One by one the lights of earth go out; but to him no bright stars begin to twinkle in yonder heaven!

How different with the man who has made the Lord his confidence; especially with him who has done so in early life. Never was his horizon clearer, his vista brighter than now.

A friend who stood by the bedside of John Knox in his

last moments, put to him the question, "Hast thou hope?" Already speech had gone, but the noble Scottish Reformer summoned up his remaining strength, and raising his right hand, pointed with his forefinger to heaven.

Archbishop Leighton beautifully observes:—"The world dares say no more for its device, than *Dum spiro spero*, 'While I breathe, I hope;' but the children of God can go further and say, *Dum exspiro spero*, 'Even when I die, I hope;' for that very event which drowns all the worldling's prospects, throws open to the Christian the gates of a glorious eternity!'

Only last week I met with an admirable comment on our text. Visiting an aged Christian lady of eighty-six, who has known the Lord from the days of her youth, I said to her, as I noticed that she was hardly able now even to read her Bible, or knit a stocking, or in any other way while away the hours, "I suppose you are much occupied now in recalling and living over again the times that are past?" Why, the old body instantly drew herself up, and said, with a warmth which I felt to be a rebuke, "Not at all, sir; I employ myself looking forward to the future; for the God I have trusted in the past is now all my hope." They say that sailors on board ship have a practice, during the first half of the voyage, of holding up their glasses, and drinking a toast to "Friends astern!" but, for the latter half of the voyage, they change it to another, "Friends ahead!" and few Christians there are, that have reached even the middle point of life, who do not feel that there is much more to invite their thoughts to the better land they have in view, than to the world from which they are every day receding.

But I am speaking to young men; and there are two main lessons from the text, which I would leave with you to-night.

I. The first is this: that *it is well for you in your youth to*

contemplate and prepare for age. A greater mistake a young man can hardly make, than to live and act as though he were to be always young. Precisely what many, nevertheless, do. At this moment I see some hundreds of young capitalists before me. You may not indeed as yet be rich in money, but you are rich in what is better than money, rich in what all the gold in the Bank of England could not buy—rich in health, in energy, in animal spirits, in all the capabilities of happiness and usefulness. One of the very last of the many great discoveries of our time is that of a method of storing up electric power; and, if I am not mistaken, the "electric accumulator" is destined to effect something like a revolution in the mechanical world. It seems to me, that each of you is like such an instrument; and the question is, What are you going to do with that vital force with which you have been charged? Oh! remember, it is of priceless value, and once wasted can never be re-supplied.

As I was wandering one day through the old cathedral at Elgin, my eye lighted upon a quaint epitaph, carved on a slab in the wall:—

> "This world is a city full of streets;
> And death is the market that all men meets;
> If life were a thing that money could buy,
> The poor could not live and the rich would not die."

The grammar may be at fault, but the sentiment is true. Oh, how many squander in early life those energies they would afterwards give a fortune to recall! How many are practically saying, Let youth have its carnival of pleasure, and let age look out for itself!

I was reading the other day of a wise old Spaniard, a man upwards of a hundred years of age, who said that, although old, he could live as if he were young, because, when young, he had lived as if he were old.

Now, gentlemen, I say you should contemplate living long, and growing old. God has implanted within each of us the desire to live; it is a proper, a healthful desire; not to have this desire indicates a diseased moral condition. If any of you at times get languid, sentimental, lackadaisical, and weary of life—and such a thing is sometimes met with amongst young men—know, that there is something wrong, decidedly wrong. You have no business to feel like that. I remember a young lady once telling me that she made it a daily prayer that she might be cut off before middle life, for she could not bear the thought of being old; but, though twenty-five years have gone, she does not think it is quite time to die yet.

No, you should wish to live, and hope to live, and intend to live, and make provision for after days. I have called you capitalists; well, take care of your capital; don't spend it now. Take care of your health. With all respect for medical men, I want you to put as little business in their way as possible. When the millennium comes there will be no doctors, for "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Almost every youthful excess and vicious irregularity brings its own punishment even in the present life, in shattered nerves, and blighted health, and depressed spirits, and shortened days.

Where do you spend your evenings? Answer me that, and I shall have some notion where you will spend eternity. Answer me that, and I will venture to predict your worldly prospects. Are you in the habit of taking stimulants? Then you may probably reduce by 50 per cent. your prospects of seeing old age. Dr. Andrew Clark stated the other day, that of every ten invalids who are put under his care, seven owe their disorder to habits of drinking. You are not going to be so foolish, I hope, as to tamper with a

fiend that every year digs a grave for hundreds of the flower of London. When a ship is launched, her deck gay with bunting, a bottle of wine is dashed against her sides; and amid the blessings of the onlookers, and their deafening huzzas, away she glides down the slip, and enters the element that is to be her home. It would be a good thing if every young man, in launching forth upon the ocean of life, would dash the wine bottle to the ground, never to touch it more. I am not going to mention names, but I could tell you of poor fellows who are sleeping ten feet deep under the [illegible] in one of yonder cemeteries, who, had they been abstemious and virtuous, would have been with us to-day [illegible] respected, useful men. Probably none of you ever met with the epitaph which Lord Byron wrote upon one of his wasted years. Here it is, and what a melancholy effusion:—

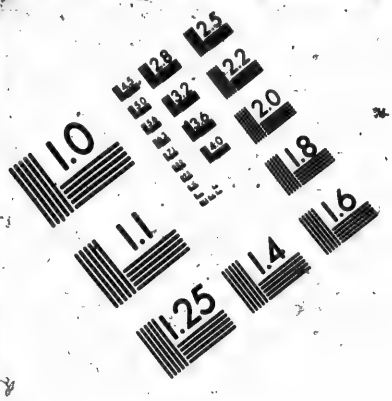
1821.
HERE LIE,
INTERRED IN THE ETERNITY
OF THE PAST,
FROM WHENCE THERE IS NO
RESURRECTION
FOR THE DAYS, WHATEVER THERE MAY BE
FOR THE DUST:
THE THIRTY-THIRD YEAR
OF AN ILL-SPENT LIFE:
WHICH, AFTER
A LINGERING DISEASE OF MANY MONTHS,
SUNK INTO LETHARGY,
AND EXPIRED,
JANUARY 22ND, 1821 A.D.,
LEAVING A SUCCESSOR
INCONSOLABLE
FOR THE VERY LOSS WHICH
OCCASIONED ITS
EXISTENCE.

Ah! this was all that rank and genius could do for its possessor, when he had yielded up himself to sinful pleasure. How truly does the Psalmist say, that "wicked men shall not live out half their days," that is, the days they might and would have lived, had they been virtuous and God-fearing men.

If some of you will act upon the advice I am now to give you, will thank me for it some day. Whilst you are to hope and prepare for a long life, you are to contemplate the possibility of being suddenly called away, and you are to make provision, even in this world, against such a contingency. It is meanly selfish for a man, dying in the prime of life and professing a Christian hope, to be perfectly happy, whilst he knows that as he steps into heaven, his wife and children will step into the workhouse. I say it is abominable! If you have the faintest prospect of having any dependent upon you, you have no business to spend on gratification all your weekly wage or your yearly salary. It is not yours to spend. The first few shillings, or the first few pounds, belong to them, and should go to pay the premium on a policy that at least will keep them from beggary.

Excuse me for mentioning this; but I am really provoked to see men, through sheer thoughtlessness, laying up for their families trouble that might easily have been spared, had they only insured their lives in some sound and respectable office.

Now, next year is not the time to do it, if you can do it to-morrow, for you don't need me to tell you that the sooner you take this step the lighter the burden will be. That grand old man, Dr. Guthrie, of Edinburgh, a few years before his death, rose up at a public meeting, and said, "When I came to Edinburgh, the people sometimes



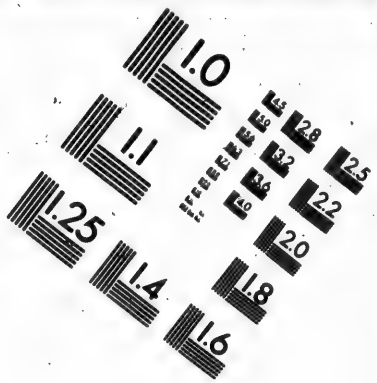
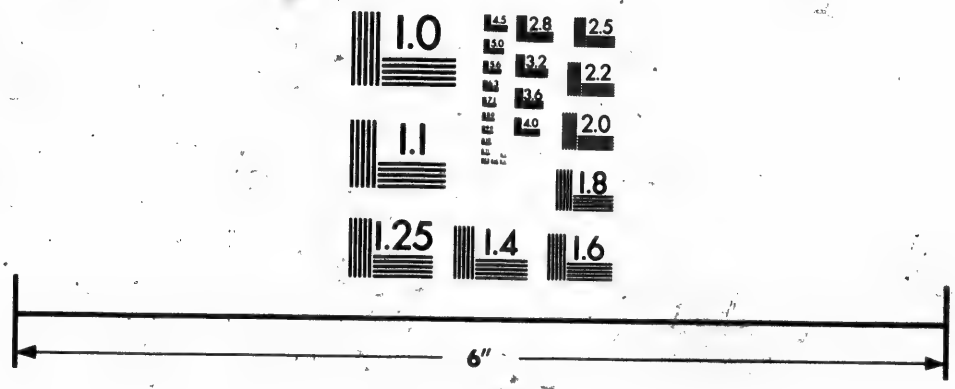
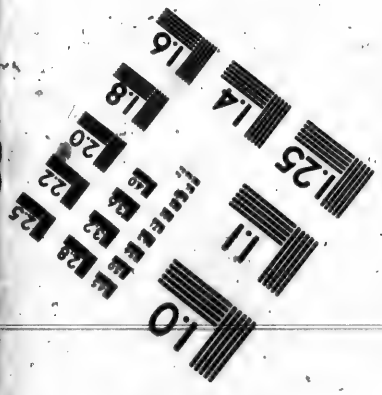
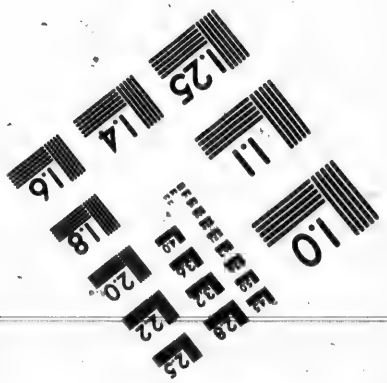


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)







Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

laughed at my blue stockings, and at my cotton umbrella, and said I looked like a ploughman; and they derided me because I lived in a house at £35 of rent, and often walked when I would have been glad to have a cab; but, gentlemen, I did all that, because I wanted to pay the premium on a life insurance that would keep my family comfortably, if I should die." Many a man talks of his "small means" as the difficulty; while he is spending as much on alcohol or tobacco, as, paid into an insurance office, would make his household secure against want.

I received a letter the other day, giving me a terrible lecture for touching on such themes as these in the pulpit; but, if the writer is here, I wish to tell him that there are two tables in the law, the one teaching our duty to our fellow-men, and the other our duty to God; and that the pulpit fails if it does not inculcate both.

However, I feel impatient to get to the latter part of my subject; for, in the second place, the text teaches us this great truth, that *the only guarantee of a blessed hope in age, is a pious trust in youth.*

The happiness of your future years lies to a great extent in your own hands, and is being determined now. Its very foundation is laid in a genuine "trust in God." Men who go forth in life without this, are anchorless and rudderless, and will drift, the Lord only knows where. I hope you don't need me to tell you that worldly success will not secure happiness. A man may have everything that earth can give him, and be wretched. We are so constituted, that our happiness always seems to lie very much in the future, or, in other words, to be largely made up of hope; and the man in whose soul hope does not brightly burn, though he have the wealth of Crœsus, is not a happy man. And it is not enough to have hope for

to-morrow, hope for next year, hope for the rest of our little existence here; it must be a hope that, as the Bible says, "enters within the veil," and extends to the world beyond the grave. It must be a hope that is "full of immortality." Oh, it is a miserable thing to spend a single day with a dark eternity lowering in the distance!

The first thing you should set your minds to, brothers, is to have all terror stricken out of the future, and the star of everlasting hope kindled brightly in your sky. Now, this comes of what David here calls making God our trust. "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust." And, what does this mean? Many an ignorant and even irreligious person talks, in light and easy tones, of putting his trust in God, whilst he knows nothing of the faith that saves the soul. The vilest characters alive can take up this cant, and persuade themselves that it is all right with them. The wretch who has imbrued his hand in the blood of his neighbour, and is caught red-handed in the crime, as soon as he is sentenced to death and lodged safely in the cell, begins to talk with easy fluency of his trust in God; and of going to meet dear friends in heaven! Out upon such loathsome sentiment and hideous hypocrisy!

Had we time just now, I could easily show you that there are two leading thoughts running through this whole psalm. These are the Lord our righteousness, and the Lord our strength. This is where David's trust was placed, and where his hope sprung. For his guilt he needed a perfect righteousness; in his weakness he needed a perfect strength; and both he found in God.

You and I, and every sinner, has the same two-fold need. Whether in our hearts we feel it or not, the need is there. As soon as the Spirit of God begins to deal with us, there comes an awful, an alarming sense of this

need. I cannot rest till I find a Divine righteousness to cover me, and a Divine strength to uphold me. It is the mission of the Gospel to point me, for both, to Jesus. Isaiah, prophesying of Him, had written, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" and to Him, as to the coming Messiah, the Hope of Israel, the Psalmist makes many an unmistakable reference. The trust I want you all to put in exercise, is an evangelical trust, a trust in the Christ of the Gospel; a trust that finds its utterance in such grand hymns as "Rock of Ages," "Jesus, Lover of my soul," "Just as I am, without one plea," "I lay my sins on Jesus," and so forth. I have been with dying men, when in these words they whispered out their last breath; they found that Christ was a real Saviour, real to them in life, and real to them in death. I do not say, that if you give your youth to folly, and your prime to ma[illegible]n, you cannot at the last have hope in God. I dare not shut the door against any man; nor deny that

> "While the lamp holds on to burn,
> The greatest sinner may return."

I see some grey heads here: God help you, my aged friends, now, if you have never done it before, to put your entire trust in the Lamb slain on Calvary.

But oh! young men, it is not easy, after long years of hard indifference, to seek the Lord in truth. There is such a thing as groping after the light and not finding it. I was once summoned to the military barracks, to visit a soldier who was lying in the sick ward. I saw at once the stamp of death upon his countenance. It was evident he had but a few moments to live. I stooped over him, held his hand and softly asked him, "Have you a hope in Christ?" His answer made me tremble and though

twenty years have gone, it rings in my ear to-day—the last words of a dying unbeliever, "I have no hope!"

Will any of you, dear lads, risk such an exit from the world? Can your life be genuinely happy, with a drawn sword hanging daily over you? Are you prepared to spend the coming year just as the past has been spent, with your relations to God and to eternity all unsettled, and your only peace found in driving these things out of your mind altogether? Or, do you want to have the great matter put straight now? No man has a right to be happy, until his peace is made with God. To some of you the call will come unexpectedly. Some of you will never see your seventieth year. Some of you will never see your fiftieth year. Some of you will never see your thirtieth year. "But," you say, "see! I am strong and healthy." Sir, you may be the first to go.

I retain a list of about fifty names—the fellow-students who sat with me on the same benches at college, nearly thirty years ago. Ah! how few of them are spared and alive to-day! The one notable thing that has struck me, in looking at the list from time to time, is, that it has been the stout and robust, the men who I thought would far out-live myself, who have been the first to go.

Would you not wish, then, to be prepared? Would it not be a glorious thing if everybody could say with Dr. Watts:—"I lay my head upon my pillow to-night, not caring whether I awake in this world or the next?" Oh, won't you all take the decisive step at once, the step that will make your whole life luminous, your death triumphant, and your eternity infinitely happy?

To compress my address into a nutshell, you are to trust Christ now in your youth; to trust Him for the pardon of your sins; to trust Him for strength in the hour of temptation; to trust Him for guidance in every time of difficulty;

to look to Him as your Redeemer, Counsellor, and Friend; and then you can go forward with courage to all the duties and burdens of life, your spirits becoming brighter as the years increase; and, if God spare you, as I trust He will many whom I now see before me, to be "old and grey-headed," you shall be able, leaning on your staff, to say:—

"Now, even in feeble age, Thy name
Doth still my languid heart inflame,
And bow my faltering knee:
Oh, yet this bosom feels the fire;
This trembling hand and drooping lyre
Have yet a strain for Thee!

Yes! broken, tuneless, still, O Lord,
This voice, transported, shall record
Thy goodness, tried so long:
Till, sinking slow, with calm decay,
Its feeble murmurs melt away
Into a seraph's song!"

Friend;
he duties
er as the
He will
nd grey-
o say:—

YOUNG MAN, ARISE!

"*And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.*"—LUKE vii. 14.

XX.

YOUNG MAN, ARISE!

I HAVE often wondered how it is that we see so few funerals in London. When you consider that in this vast metropolis every eight minutes witnesses the departure of a soul, and that there are on an average a hundred and eighty interments every day of the year, I think you will agree with me that it is surprising our eyes are so seldom arrested by the mournful pageantry of death. And even when it does pass before us, such is the stir of the busy streets, and so absorbed are we with our several pursuits, that it is marvellous how little impression is made. We may feel for a moment solemnised, but the next moment we are as deep in our worldly business as ever.

There is something, however, specially touching and impressive in a village funeral. In a small population every family is known; and death, when it enters, throws a general sadness and gloom around. How silent and dejected are these mourners, as they bear their burden slowly to the tomb! How many an eye is moist, as the humble *cortège* creeps onward to the old churchyard.

And, if it is a young man that is carried out, a youth of promise, who was the hope of his family, the life and joy of the village circle, the sorrow is exceptionally heavy. What pathos there is in those lines of Gray:—

"One morn I miss'd him on th' accustom'd hill,
Along the heath, and near his fav'rite tree;
Another came, nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.

"The next, with dirges due, in sad array,
Slow through the churchyard path we saw him borne;
Approach and read, for thou can'st read, the lay
Graved on a stone beneath yon aged thorn."

Of the ancient village of Nain we know but little, nor is there anything to interest us in it but the fact of its having been the scene of one of Christ's greatest miracles. St. Luke speaks of it as "a city," but we all know that in Scripture that word is often used in a very different sense from that which we commonly attach to it. Nain exists to the present day; and Dr. Thomson, who visited the spot, speaks of it as a small hamlet, occupied by a few families of fanatical Moslems. He adds, "It is in keeping with the one historic incident that renders it dear to the Christian, that its only antiquities are tombs. These are situated mainly on the east of the village, and it was in that direction, I presume, that the widow's son was being carried on that memorable occasion."

There were several things that combined to make this funeral peculiarly affecting. Raise up for a moment the sheet that is spread over the corpse (for the coffin is borne on an open bier), and look on that pale countenance—it is the face of a young man. Perhaps it was consumption that laid its withering hand upon him, or fever may have snapped the thread of life; but there he is, cold, motionless, and still. I think death never seems so utterly cruel, as when it cuts one off in the bloom of opening manhood. A little child in its coffin is a sad sight, but often a very beautiful one; and, when we reflect on its pure life, hardly stained by the pollutions of the world, and on the cares and dangers from which it has so early made escape, we cannot but feel it was a kind hand that stooped down from heaven and snatched it away.

And when an old saint dies, we feel it is wrong to weep. He was tired of life's journey, and longed to be away. His work was done, and he was just waiting to be released. You look on his calm features, ere the coffin lid is fastened down; you kiss the cold forehead, from which the wrinkles seem to have melted away, as though giving promise of a new and immortal youth; and you say, "Happy man! having served your generation by the will of God, you have now fallen asleep."

But oh! the dispensation is very dark when it is a young man that is being carried out to burial.

> "'Tis hard to die, before I've reached my prime,
> To sleep insensate, ere I have grown old,
> Ere faded visions, or the hand of time
> Had twined the silver with my locks of gold."

And yet, mysterious as is the event, and deeply affecting, it is no uncommon one. It occurs every week in London. Even in this church I have seen some of the most bright and promising lives suddenly brought to a close. Your youthful strength gives you no guarantee that death is far away. Nobody steps out of the world when he expects to do so. Though for twenty years you have never had an ache nor a pain, you can make no safe calculation about the future. A fine, amiable, robust fellow of twenty, who used to worship here, was sitting in his office one day, when a fellow-clerk came up merrily, and, slapping him upon the back, said, "Well, how are you this morning?" That good-humoured blow injured the spine, and, after some weeks of almost total paralysis, the young man was borne to his last resting place.

You don't know in what form death may visit you; but, lay this well to heart—that youth, and energy, and muscular strength, and robust health, and good worldly prospects are no security against the invader.

Young man, as thou wouldst be prepared for life, ask thyself the question, Am I prepared to die?

But, secondly, there is another thing that adds much to the impressiveness of this funeral—I learn that that young man is an only son. Well, I imagine that, let a family circle be ever so large, the parents feel there is not one of them that can be spared. Every one is dear, every one is precious. A rich and benevolent gentleman, who had no children of his own, was entering a steamboat one day, when he noticed a poor man with a group of little ones around him, all in a state of pitiful destitution. Stepping up to him, he proposed to take one of the children and adopt it as his own. "I think," said he, "it will be a great relief to you." "A what!" exclaimed the other. "A relief to you, I said." "Such a relief to me, sir," rejoined the poor man, "as to have my right arm cut off; it may be necessary, but only a parent can know the trial."

But, an only son, in whom all the hopes and the joys of the parents centre: ah! it is long since the extreme bitterness of such a bereavement passed into a proverb; "They shall mourn for him," writes Zechariah, "as one mourneth for his only son."

I have not yet finished the picture. You will not wonder that this funeral created exceptional sympathy, and that "much people" of Nain joined the procession, when I remind you that this young man's mother was a widow. Poor body, he was her sole support. The light of her dwelling was now put out; the comfort and support of her advancing years taken away. No doubt he had been a good son, or his death would not have created so profound a feeling in the place.

Oh! if there is one trait in a young man's character more beautiful than another, it is devotion to his parents, and specially to his mother. I have known lads who have gone such lengths in sin, that you almost gave them up for lost, they seemed utterly hardened; but there was one tender point that still remained; you could always move them, and bring the sleeve to their eyes, when you spoke to them of their mother! My dear friends (excuse me saying it), there is many a way in which you can show a tender and loving consideration for the old folks at home; and to those of you who have had the misfortune to lose your father, I would specially say, Oh, do the utmost in your power to lighten the burdens, and cheer the heart, of the dear widowed one who remains.

But, see! the procession moves slowly on, and the people stand back to let it pass, and every head is uncovered in token of respect; and now it has got out of the city gate (for the burial place, according to the Jewish law, was outside the walls); but ere they reach the little cemetery, a strange incident occurs.

Who is this Stranger that mysteriously approaches and stops the procession? Mark how He lays His hand upon the bier, and, amid the silent astonishment of the mourners, bids the dejected widow, "Weep not." And then, in presence of the awe-struck company, who perceive that a Divine one is in the midst of them, He addresses to the pale corpse these words of my text—"Young man, I say unto thee, arise!"

With Dr. Trench, I believe that this majestic voice was something more than a summons back to this mortal life—that it included also an awakening of the young man to a higher and a spiritual life; with nothing short of which would the Saviour have "delivered him to his mother." He gave him back to her who bare him, not merely to be

for a few years longer her earthly companion, but, as now a saved and regenerate man, to be to her a joy, both for time and for eternity.

And this brings us to the great and solemn truth which the text contains, and which I wish to impress upon you all; that, until aroused by the voice of Jesus, every one of you is wrapped in the sleep of death. In the name of my Divine Master, I address myself to every unconverted, unsaved youth in this building, and say, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!"

Arise from the death of *unbelief*. Now, tell me, is there such a thing as conversion, a change of heart, a being born again, a getting a new nature? If you say no, you may as well put away the Bible, and discard Christ as your teacher, for if there is one truth in this Book more plainly declared than another, it is this, "Ye must be born again." So complete a change is this, that it is called a "passing from death unto life." Everyone who has not undergone it is said to be dead, and all who have experienced it are said to be alive. When you become a saved man, it is as though a corpse were quickened into life. Listen to the manner in which the Apostle addresses believers: "You hath he quickened, who were dead;" and how he speaks to the unsaved; "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." Were I to stand upon a gravestone in yonder cemetery, and with a loud voice make my appeal to the dust beneath to come forth to life, it would only be a picture of the way in which Christ bids me in His name summon each dear unsaved brother here into a state of grace: "Young man, I say unto thee, arise!" I know there is a mystery in this doctrine, as it links your inability with your responsibility, the free agency of man with the sovereignty of God; I know there are difficulties here, which neither you nor I can fully explain; but, none the less do I make bold

to say, that such of you as are unconverted are willingly unconverted, and that wherever there is the sincere and ingenuous desire to be a child of God, the grace is given which translates you out of darkness into marvellous light.

When you regard the miracles which Christ wrought upon the bodies of men as types or analogues of spiritual operations (and thus we ought ever to view them), it is interesting to notice that one of the three persons whom He raised to life was a young man.

One, you remember, was a little girl of twelve, the only daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue; and the third was Lazarus, who we have reason to believe was a man well on in life; for as none are too young, so none are too old, to experience His quickening power.

But I like to think of Him, as showing, by His selection of this youth of Nain to be one of the three grandest illustrations of His power, His great interest in young men, and His readiness and ability to save them.

Ah! my dear friends, there are times when you are ready to think that religion is very well for little children; and that it is very well for the old people, who have had their enjoyment of this world! "but," you say to me, "you don't expect a young man like me to be religious." I do. And, more than that, I say that real piety is nowhere more becoming and more graceful than in those who are in the bloom and vigour of opening manhood. I do not believe there is one of you now listening to me, who wishes to discard Christianity. It makes you wild to hear a man speaking against religion. You would not sit at the same desk with a blasphemer, nor work in the same shop, if you could help it. You think with pleasure of your early days in the Sunday-school, and often in the street you whistle over, with

tender memories of the past, the hymn-tunes you used to sing; and you love to recall that little sister who often spoke to you of Jesus, and is now gone to be with Him in Heaven.

And you mean to be a Christian some day. You like to see old people pious. You know that nothing but the hand of Christ can smooth out the wrinkles of care, or shed a mellow light upon the aged brow.

But you do not quite see the necessity of your becoming religious just now.

Oh, my friends, I am here to-night to tell you, that the same Saviour who cried to Jairus's little daughter, "Maid, arise," and to the deceased brother of Martha and Mary, "Lazarus, come forth," stopped the bier at the gate of Nain, and cried to the widow's son, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise."

There are some of you who, if you are not to be Christian young men, will never be Christian old men. You will not see even middle life. It is as certain as the bills of mortality and the law of probability can make it, that some of you will die young. You don't think it will be you, but it will be you. On Wednesday last, I was called to visit a young man who used often to attend these monthly services. He was on his bed of death. Only twenty-one. I had come straight from other houses of sorrow, and was secretly praying God to give me the fitting word to speak. But, as I entered the room, and looked at the dear fellow, I saw the day of grace had closed. Just one quiver of the lip —he was dead! Breath gone. Life extinct. Time ended. Eternity begun.

Ah! you who are looking towards this pulpit just now,

with earnest attention, it may be you next! I may now be ringing the last bell of Divine mercy to which you will ever listen. Dear young brother, you cannot afford to be lost. The interests at stake are too tremendous to be imperilled by delay. Oh, in this evening hour of a blessed Sabbath, when everything is so still, and the cords of Divine love are so strong, and heaven is so near, and Christ is so pressing, won't you yield, and say, "Yes, Lord, at Thy bidding I arise, to live from this day for Thee!"

But some young man says (I know it as well as if you had told me), "I feel the force of all you say; I know I ought to be a Christian, and shall never be happy till I am one; but it is no use trying; sin has got the upper hand of me, and, when certain temptations meet me, I fall, and must fall, and will fall." I remember of a young man talking to me in that style, and saying, "I believe the Gospel to be true; that Christ is an omnipotent Saviour, I have not a doubt. I can fully trust Him, so far as that is concerned; and yet I dare not profess Him, because I know that a particular sin has complete mastery over me, and I am not going to be a hypocrite." But I took him by the button-hole, and said, "Let me read a verse to you," and then I turned to John i. 12:—"As many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God;" and I showed him that, when one accepts Christ, he accepts Him, not merely as a Saviour from guilt and from hell, but as a Saviour from lust, and from vile passions, and from evil thoughts; and that He must be trusted for this just as for the other.

It was like a new discovery to that young man; he had been taught only one-half of the gospel, and this was the other half. Now, there are special sins trying hard to keep

every one of you out of heaven. The devil has all sorts of weapons in his armoury, and he tries one here and another there, as he thinks most likely to succeed. With this man it is the wine-cup; with that, the dice-box; with a third, the lust of the flesh; with a fourth, a craving for money; and so on. With such strong ropes as these he tries to bind you; but I have to tell you to-night that they shall all become as the green withes of Samson, or as a thread of tow when it touches the fire, when once you yield response to that mighty voice, which calls you forth from the prison-house of corruption—"Young man, I say unto thee, arise."

Arise—from the death of *unbelief;* arise—from *the bondage of sin;* and once more, arise—from *the apathy of indolence.* In some of these monthly sermons I have spoken to you of your social responsibilities; I have even touched upon your political responsibilities; I have dealt with questions of health, and physical development, and intellectual culture, and polite manners; but, this evening, I am at the root of all—a decided adhesion to Christ.

Every ten years the national census is taken. On such occasions there is generally no small discussion as to whether it shall include the religious faith of every inhabitant of these realms. Shall the Government register how many Episcopalians there are, and Presbyterians, and Methodists, and Roman Catholics, and Baptists, and Swedenborgians, and Mormons, and so forth? Well, such statistics are apt to be very fallacious and deceiving; but, I believe, if all the people of the British Isles were polled there would be found very few, a mere handful, who would not wish to be classified, in some form or another, under the Christian name.

Yet, of thirty millions who desire to bear Thy blessed name, O Christ, how many truly quickened into life, and working for the spread of Thy Kingdom? Shall we say one in fifty? One in a hundred? One in a thousand?

The great mass of nominal Christians are asleep. The only thing they want religion for is its comfort; it gives them a pillow to lay their head on.

Is that the purpose for which *you* have enlisted? When the stern Scottish chief was walking round his encampment one night, he saw his own son lying on a pillow of snow, which he had carefully gathered and packed together before he lay down; the father kicked the pillow from under his son's head, and said, "Come, I will have no effeminacy here. I want robust men in my army." Oh, how many in Christ's army are fast asleep, not on a bolster of snow, but on a pillow of down. "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." Arise from the slumber of lethargy, and come and grapple with the foe. Oh, when all the forces of darkness are in full blast; when steam printing presses are throwing off from their rollers infidel and immoral publications countless as the flakes of snow; when the gaudy palaces of alcohol are thronged with thousands who are speeding to a drunkard's doom; when the night air is polluted with the scream and laughter that issue from countless saloons of abandonment and dissipation; when a million people at our doors never bow the knee to Jehovah, nor read a single verse of the blessed Bible: is it the time for one of you to stand hesitating between the opposing camps, and not fling your whole soul and energy into the cause of your Redeemer? By God's grace, be this the hour of your decision: and, by-and-by, when He, who of old summoned back to life the young villager of Nain, shall come in the majesty of resurrection glory, and, amid

the trumpeting of the archangel, and the out-flashings of the judgment throne, and the up-heaving of a world of graves, shall once more utter that word, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise," you shall respond with joy, and leaping from the tomb, shall rise to a blissful immortality.

Printed by Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Limited, London and Aylesbury.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Third Edition, Crown 8vo, Cloth. Price 3s. 6d.

TALKS WITH YOUNG MEN.

CONTENTS.

The Glory of Young Men.—Called to a Kingdom.—Wanted: a MAN! — An Artisan, yet a Gentleman. — Putting away Childish Things. — Master of One's Self. — Setting Out in Life.—Young Men from the Country.—The Eyes of a Young Man Opened.—True to the Religion of One's Fathers.—Better than a Sheep.—Hungry Students.—The Way to Get on in the World.—Doing everything thoroughly.—Starting on the Right Rails.—Beginning Well, but Ending Ill.—Buried with the Burial of an Ass.—The Right Sort of Friend.—Companionship with Fools.—The Conclusion of the Whole Matter.

Press Notices of Previous Editions.

"He gives young men fine manly advice, full of grace and truth. Enlivened by story and proverb, fresh with sympathy, and on fire with zeal, these short lectures are just what they should be."—*Sword and Trowel.*

"It is full of wit, wisdom, geniality, and high-toned, manly Christian teaching."—*Sheffield Independent.*

"For sterling common-sense, combined with true spiritual feeling, they have not been surpassed for many a day. The addresses bristle with telling metaphors and illustrations, and the book can be read from cover to cover with profitable interest."—*Literary World.*

"These 'talks' are remarkable for the capital selection of subjects, their effective treatment and illustration, sensible advice, and personal appeals, which are by turns pointed and pathetic." — *Clergyman's Magazine.*

"Dr. Davidson is one of the most popular and successful preachers to young men. A book so full of wise counsel, so bright, and full of sympathy with those for whom it is intended, should be circulated far and wide among our young men. There is a ring of true Christian manliness in every paragraph."—*British Messenger.*

"Earnest, racy, practical, spiritual, full of common sense and homely wisdom."—*Evangelical Magazine.*

"Their style is simple and direct, their tone thoroughly healthy; while the author can attain upon occasion to the height of strong and impressive eloquence."—*Scotsman.*

"Elevated in tone, genial in spirit, and practical in their tendency—well fitted to arrest the attention of the young, to instil the principles of true manhood, and to strengthen the bases of moral and intellectual growth."—*Ecclesiastical Gazette.*

"This is one of the very best books for young men we have seen There is not a dull page in the book."—*Baptist.*

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27, PATERNOSTER ROW

BY W. M. THAYER.

FROM THE TANYARD TO WHITE HOUSE. The Story of President Grant's Life. With Portrait and Illustrations, crown 8vo, cloth, price 5s. May also be had handsomely bound in half calf, 6s. net.

FROM LOG CABIN TO WHITE HOUSE. The Story of President Garfield's Life. 150th Thousand. "Prize" Illustrated Edition, 5s.; crown 8vo, with Portrait, 3s. 6d.; Cheap Editions, sewed, 1s.; cloth, 1s. 6d.

GEORGE WASHINGTON: His Boyhood and Manhood. With Portrait, 5s.

THE PIONEER BOY, AND HOW HE BECAME PRESIDENT. The Story of the Life of Abraham Lincoln. With Portrait, 5s.

THE TRUE WOMAN. Elements of Character drawn from the Life of Mary Lyon and others. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s.

TACT, PUSH, AND PRINCIPLE: A Book for those who wish to Succeed in Life. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.

DR. PATERSON'S HEALTH LECTURES TO YOUNG MEN.

Complete in one Volume.

LIFE, FUNCTION, HEALTH: Studies for Young Men. By H. SINCLAIR PATERSON, M.D. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.

The three series of Lectures may be had separately, as follows:—

STUDIES IN LIFE, 1s. THE HUMAN BODY AND ITS FUNCTIONS, 1s, HEALTH STUDIES, 1s.

A YOUNG MAN'S SAFEGUARD IN THE PERILS OF THE AGE. By the Rev. W. GUEST, F.G.S. Author of "Stephen Grellet," etc. Sixteenth Thousand. Fcap. 8vo, 2s. 6d.

M'CONAUGHY.—Capital for Working Boys. Chapters on Character-Building. By J. E. M'CONAUGHY. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

"We could scarcely overpraise the capital chapters of character-building. The amount of good solid advice crowded into this handsome volume, and interspersed with celebrated living examples, and couched in terse, transparent phraseology, is simply wonderful."—*Christian.*

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.